MAN'S CHIEF END

BX
9843
D78
M36
1912
GTU
Storage

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

THE GIFT OF

BRITISH AND FOREIGN
UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION
OF LONDON, ENGLAND

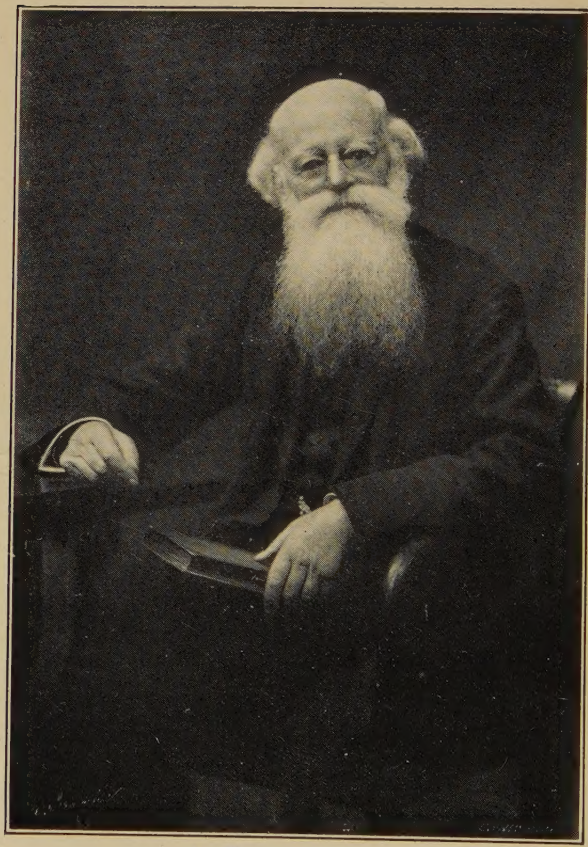
Property of

CBSK

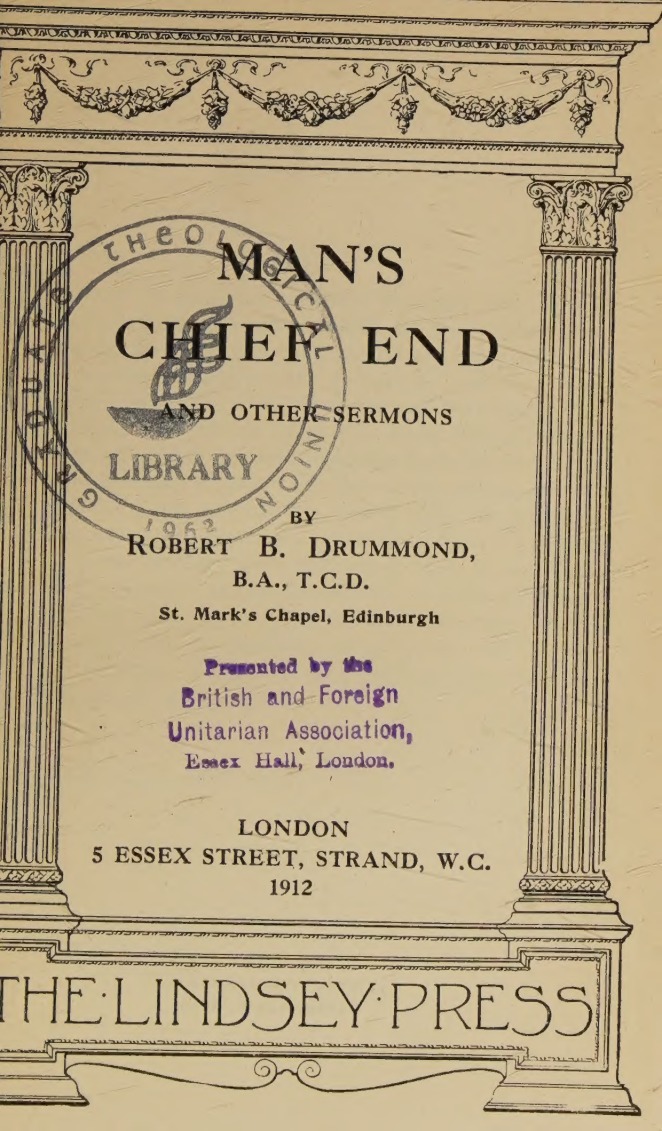
Please return to

Graduate Theological

Union Library



Very truly
Robert B. Drummond



MAN'S CHIEF END

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

ROBERT B. DRUMMOND,

B.A., T.C.D.

St. Mark's Chapel, Edinburgh

Presented by the
British and Foreign
Unitarian Association,
Essex Hall, London.

LONDON
5 ESSEX STREET, STRAND, W.C.
1912

THE LINDSEY PRESS

BX
9843
D78
M36
1912

PRINTED BY ELSOM AND CO
MARKET PLACE, HULL

PREFACE

WHEN a man has preached for more than half a century from the same pulpit, he may perhaps be excused for wishing to leave behind him some memorial of his work slightly more permanent than a pile of undigested MSS., even if it should be—*only a few Sermons*. It was no doubt this desire that led me to think of making this small selection from the accumulations of many years. That the volume will be acceptable to many among my friends and hearers, their own invariable kindness assures me. That it is likely to prove helpful and instructive to a much wider circle of readers, the readiness of the McQuaker Trustees (to whom I here tender my grateful acknowledgments) to undertake the expense of publication, encourages me to hope. If this is their expectation I trust it will not be disappointed.

R. B. D.

Edinburgh, *May*, 1912

CONTENTS

		PAGE
I	Man's Chief End	1
II	The Seven Words from the Cross	18
III	The Element of the Beautiful in Religion	38
IV	The Divine Motherhood	56
V	The Light of the World	69
VI	The Law of Retribution in Greek Tragedy	88
VII	Felix before Paul: Man and the Moral Order	106

THE DIVINE

From the German of Goethe

Noble let man be,
Helpful and good!
For this alone
Marks him distinct
From all the beings
That we know.

Hail to the unknown
Higher Beings
Whom we fore-feel!
Let his example teach us
To believe in them.

For unfeeling
Is Nature:
The sun shines
On the evil and the good,
And to the transgressor
The moon and the stars
Gleam bright as to the saint.

Wind and streams,
Thunder and hail,
Rush on their way,
And 'whelm,
As they pass,
One and another.

So also Fortune
Gropes 'mid the crowd;
Strikes now the child's
Curly innocence,
Now the bald pate
Of the wretch grown grey in sin.

The Divine

After great, eternal,
Iron laws,
Must we all
Accomplish
Our being's circle.

Only man alone
May perform the Impossible;
He distinguishes,
Chooses and judges;
He can give the momer
Longer duration

He alone may
Reward the good,
Punish the bad,
Heal and deliver,
All that wanders or strays
Bind and make use of.

And we honour
The Immortals,
As though they were men,
And did on the grand scale
What on the small scale
The good man does or might do.

Let the noble man
Be helpful and good
Unwearied in pursuing
The Useful, the Right;
Let him be to us a fore-type
Of the Beings we dream of!

I

MAN'S CHIEF END

'WHAT is the chief end of man?' is the well-known first question of the Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism; and the answer is equally well known: 'Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.' This answer has been much admired; but while it may be admitted that it has in it something impressive and grand, it is at the same time permissible to doubt how far it is adapted to the intelligence of children and 'such as are of weaker capacity.' I remember a friend of mine who had been brought up in the old-fashioned way, having learned the catechism by rote in his boyhood, once remarking to me that this answer had been a serious trouble to him. He had some idea, he said, of what was meant by glorifying God, but what it was to enjoy him was altogether beyond his comprehension.

We shall not doubt indeed that the words had a meaning to those who prepared the catechism, or that they have, in themselves, a very noble and solemn one, but for children surely something simpler and more comprehensible might well be desired. Let us try, then, whether we cannot hit the mark better by suggesting an alternative answer. *Question :* 'What is the chief end of man?' The question itself might be objected to as a little too abstract to begin with, and itself standing in need of explanation, but let that pass. *Answer :* 'To be happy and good,' or, as there is little objection on the score of intelligibleness to the first clause, let us say, 'to glorify God, and be happy and good.' It may not sound so well. It may not have—it has not—so grand a meaning, but this answer, I submit, is more within the comprehension of children, and therefore more likely to be serviceable to them.

Our subject this morning is the chief end of man. Is the end of man's being, the governing principle of his life, the object for which he exists, and which he ought above all things to seek, happiness as the Epicureans taught of old, and as Utilitarian

philosophers teach to-day, or is it *virtue*, as the Stoics held ? It was the question which divided those two ancient schools, and on which philosophy has been divided ever since, though with a growing disposition in these latter days to reconcile the two contending views, and to recognize that while man, like every sentient creature, must by the very law of his being desire and seek for happiness, while it is right that he should do so, yet must he not make it the primary aim or object of his endeavours, but leaving all considerations of personal pleasure or pain upon one side, seek, as the main end of his existence, to live out his life nobly and follow faithfully the rule of right.

It is a very plausible theory, and one which long recommended itself, that pleasure and pain are the two mainsprings of human activity, and that in all his doings man is influenced by a regard for his own well-being. Certain it is that no one would wish to be in pain if he could avoid it. No one would desire to be unhappy. No one would follow virtue itself, if its practice were attended not by occasional and temporary suffering and trouble, but by constant and enduring pain. Nor, indeed, could that

continue to be regarded as conduct which it was right for a man to pursue to which the universe had affixed such a mark of disapproval. Even he who denies himself in order to do an act of kindness to another, it is maintained, does so because he finds more inward satisfaction, a higher and diviner pleasure, in his self-denial, and in the act of benevolence itself, than he would obtain from any gratification of his personal wishes or passions. Even the martyr, who lays down his life for his religion, who chooses to bear all the torments which cruelty can inflict, and to give his body to be burned, rather than deny his faith, is still seeking that which brings him the greatest amount of satisfaction. The Christian martyr has placed before him the infinite rewards of another life, and the smiles of an approving God; which he believes would be converted into burning wrath, did he prove faithless. And even apart from any thought of an eternal reward, there is still the inward satisfaction arising from a consciousness of having stood firm against every foe, and the approval of all good men, and of the generations that are yet to be. This really selfish theory was put in its extreme form

by Paley in his well-known definition of virtue. 'Virtue,' wrote Paley, 'is doing good to mankind in obedience to the commands of God, and for the sake of everlasting life.'

One naturally thinks, here, of Carlyle's fierce onslaughts, in the 'Sartor' and elsewhere, on the *Happiness principle*, and all utilitarian theories, and the unmeasured contempt which he expresses for happiness as an incentive to human effort, or indeed a thing to be sought by man at all. 'Nothing less,' he declares in his wild way, 'than God's infinite universe altogether to himself, therein to enjoy infinity, and fill every wish as fast as it rose, would make one shoeblack happy, inasmuch as nothing less would satisfy the *infinite* within him.' And accordingly he exhorts us not to concern ourselves about our happiness at all, but—here unconsciously reproducing the old Calvinistic doctrine that even the reprobate are bound to thank God for the sovereign decree that dooms them to eternal pain—urges upon us that, as a little time ago we had no right to *be* at all, so have we none now to murmur or complain, though we were 'born and predestined not to be Happy, but to be

Unhappy.' To which rhapsodising Matthew Arnold, in his Discourses in America, has aptly enough replied with a quotation from St. Augustine, who says 'Act we *must* in pursuance of what gives us most delight.' 'Both Epictetus and Augustine,' says Arnold, 'know and frankly say that the desire for happiness is the root and ground of man's being.' I wish the words had been quoted in which they said so, and as they have not I must venture to doubt if they went quite that length. 'Tell him and show him,' continues Mr. Arnold, and here he says well, 'tell him and show him that he places his happiness wrong, that he seeks delight where delight will never be really found; then you illumine and further him. But you only confuse him by telling him to cease to desire happiness; and you will not tell him this unless you are already confused yourself.'

Yes, that is excellent. I will certainly never tell anyone to cease to desire happiness; but will rather exhort him to seek it in the right way, and in those objects which are capable of conferring it in the highest degree and in the most enduring form. But I maintain at the same time that Carlyle is not altogether wrong. The truth,

as often happens, lies between, and the truth, I am persuaded, is that whether in following a virtuous or a vicious course, man does not act exclusively, or even mainly from a regard for his own well-being; that pleasure and pain are not the mainsprings of human activity, and consequently, that happiness is not, by itself, the chief end of man. Let us bring this matter to the test of one or two particular cases; and first we will take the case of the merciful man in the familiar example of the Good Samaritan.

The Samaritan going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, sees a man whom he recognizes as a Jew lying wounded and bleeding on the road side. He hastens to his assistance, binds up his wounds, pours oil and wine into his sores, sets him on his own beast, and with many soothing words, we doubt not, conveys him safely to an inn, where he charges the landlord to take good care of him, and promises to pay all costs. What has impelled him to perform this act of charity? What has been his motive? Why has he gone out of his way, and put himself to all this trouble, merely to serve a stranger, one whom he is never likely to see again?

Perhaps you will say he has considered that these are lawless times, that this road, which he is obliged to traverse frequently, is much infested by robbers, and that some day or other, he himself may be in the position of the wounded traveller; and in a rightly ordered world, how could he expect there would be anyone ready to help *him*, if he now passed on regardless of one in need? Others will follow the example which he sets, and no one will refuse help to the man who has been so prompt to give help to others. Or perhaps he has had regard to the opinion of those around him. He is travelling as a foreigner, in a country inhabited by Jews—a people between whom and his own nation there has been a long-standing feud, who despise him as a Samaritan, and whom it would be natural for him to hate. By this act of kindness it cannot but be that he will conciliate the goodwill of the people among whom he is travelling and win their applause. Or again, it may be neither of these motives, it may be no consideration of an earthly nature that moves him. It may be that he is looking for his reward in a life to come, that he is acting on Paley's principle of doing good to mankind in obedience to the com-

mand of God, for the sake of everlasting life. Or finally, it may have been nothing so concrete and commonplace as any of these objects, but merely the inward satisfaction of a soul at peace with itself, and in possession of a good conscience, which he sought. Let it have been, however, which of these motives it will, we cannot but instinctively feel that the presence of any one of them, even the last, would in some degree take away from the grace and charm of the Samaritan's act; and we prefer therefore to think that in that act he was influenced by none of the motives which I have mentioned, but that in doing that deed of mercy he was simply acting according to his nature;—he saw the wounded traveller needing his help, he felt that *he* was there to help him, that to help him was the right thing for him to do, and accordingly without any thought of consequences—without reflection or deliberation of any kind—he hastened at once to his assistance. Had he not done so, indeed, the deterrent influences might have proved even stronger than those on the other side. He might have considered the risk he was running in delaying his own journey and encumbering himself with the

charge of a stranger ; he might have thought of the views of his fellow-countrymen who would bitterly resent this foolhardy kindness rendered to a Jew ; and such considerations might have urged him to follow the example of the priest and Levite who had gone before him !

We believe, then, that the Samaritan acted simply from the impulse of a right nature—of the goodwill—and that he did the right thing under the circumstances, not from any self-regarding motives, however refined, but simply *because* it was right.

Of course I cannot say through what wonderful discipline, in how many generations of mankind, how many centuries or millenniums of time this right nature—this good will—was unfolded by the Spirit of God acting in and through the finite nature of man. I have read somewhere that when a Kaffir sees one of his countrymen, even though he were his own brother, bowled over by a white man's bullet, he exhibits the most callous indifference, hardly noticing it at all, certainly not noticing it in any spirit of compassion. You would say that in that man the little spark of sympathy which surely nature plants in even the most savage

bosoms, must have been purposely extinguished. But not so, because it was never there. *That* you see was the beginning, or nearly the beginning. Selfish considerations, social law, religion, conscience, all took their share in the long process of evolution. The end is when the divine spirit of love and pity has so far triumphed over the obstacles presented by the brute nature that it acts freely and spontaneously, and without needing any stimulus from the outside, whether from pain or pleasure, from fear or hope.

We have considered the case of the good man. Let us now take an example of an opposite kind. Here is the miser whose whole time is occupied, all whose thoughts are engaged, in the hoarding up of money, in the counting of his gains, in the amassing of wealth which he *knows* he can never use, and which so soon as he is gone will be scattered to the four winds. I do not ask whether he is happy in his employment, for we know that money in itself, apart from the use made of it, and especially if no use is made of it, whatever momentary gratification may attend its acquisition, cannot possibly bring enduring bliss, and that such

is the judgment of mankind we learn from the very name *miser*, miserable, which by common consent has been attached to the character I have described. But I do ask, Is he by this means seeking happiness—is this the object of his labours and self-denials; does he delude himself into the belief that in this way he will obtain it? It may be very seriously doubted. More probable is it, at least in most cases, that he is under no delusion, that he knows well he is a miserable being, and he only yields to the ruling passion because he has not strength of character to resist it.

Much the same thing may be said of the man who is intemperate in eating or drinking. Self-gratification, no doubt, led him on in the beginning; but by and by, he finds out—fortunate if he does so in time, often, alas! too late—that happiness does not that way lie, that misery and ruin will be the too probable consequences of the conduct he is pursuing; yet he finds it impossible to release himself from the chains of habit, which grow heavier every day and are drawn more tightly round him with every new indulgence.

It is not Happiness pure and simple—it

is not happiness in and for itself, that is the chief end of human existence—it is rather happiness through virtue, or through such a course of conduct as befits the good man, and as the experience of ages has judged to be right. And for my own part I see no reason why the Stoical and Epicurean theories—the Stoical virtue and the Epicurean happiness—may not in this way be combined and reconciled. Modern Philosophy in fact has found a term which seems fairly to unite them both and which is more comprehensive than either—the term *Self-Realization*, which has been thus explained at length by a recent German philosopher: 'We may say in a most general way that the goal at which every living creature aims, *is the normal exercise of the vital functions which constitute its nature*. Every animal desires to live the life for which it is predisposed. Its natural disposition manifests itself in impulses, and determines its activity. The formula may also be applied to man. He desires to live a *human* life and all that is implied in it; that is, *a mental*, historical life, in which there is room for the exercise *of all human mental powers and virtues*. He desires to play and to learn, to work and to acquire

wealth, to possess and to enjoy, to form and to create ; he desires to love and to admire, to obey and to rule, to fight and to win, to make poetry and to dream, to think and to investigate. And he desires to do all these things in the natural order of development as life provides them. He desires to live as a brother among brothers, as a friend among friends, as a companion among companions, as a citizen among citizens, and also to prove himself an enemy against enemies. Finally, he desires to experience what the lover, husband and father experience—he desires to rear and educate children who shall preserve and transmit the contents of his own life. And after he has lived such a life and has acquitted himself like an honest man, he has realized his desires ; his life is complete ; contentedly he awaits the end, and his last wish is to be gathered peacefully to his fathers ' (Paulsen).

Shall we say then that the chief end of man is *Self-Realization*—not Happiness in itself, not Virtue in itself, but both through the *realization of self*—of all that is best and most human in man ; that it is the chief end of a man to be truly a man, just as it is the chief end of a tulip or a rose to *be*

a tulip or a rose, perfect each in its kind, and to discharge perfectly the functions of those flowers ?

This Realization of self, however, obviously means the realization of the *Higher Self*—of all that is most truly human, and therefore most truly divine in the nature of man, and as it implies that there is an ideal before man which he continually pursues, and in the attainment of which, or the progressive approach to which alone, he can find peace, ascending to a higher plane, we may perhaps call it the Realization of God in man, or even from a still higher point of view God's Realization of himself in man, seeing that it is only in and through the good man the noblest attributes of God—his Love and Righteousness—*are* realized ; and it is in self-identification with God that man finds the perfection of his being and the height of his bliss. And here we are brought back at last to those words of the Catechism, the value of which I have already acknowledged, however inappropriate I might think them as coming from infant lips. 'The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever.' What the Calvinistic fathers who drew up the Catechism may have under-

stood by enjoying God we can only conjecture, but we know that their stern theology taught them to regard it as contributing to his glory that in the exercise of his sovereign will he ordained certain of his creatures to dishonour and wrath, while choosing others, of his own free grace and love, to everlasting glory. No doubt they had visions of the great white throne, and of myriads of angels round about it harping on their golden harps, and of themselves as arrayed in white robes bearing palm-branches in their hands, and giving praise to the lamb slain for the sin of the world; and we know from their scriptural references that their thoughts were carried to those beautiful words of the Psalmist—'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.' Yes; but it is not necessary to look forward across the gulf of death to another and far-off world, it is not necessary to have recourse to the language, the thoughts, or the faith of ancient saints and sages, in order, in a very true and elevated sense, to *enjoy* God. Do we not enjoy him in the common things of

life—in the scenes of nature, in the good people we meet, in the good actions of which we hear or read, in the emotions of pity and love, or indignation against wrong, which stir in our own hearts? If God is in all things, realizing himself as Beauty in the material world, in every ray of sunshine and every drop of rain, in every blossom of spring and every flower of summer, and every leaf touched with autumn's glory; if He is in all souls, if it is He who guides the artist's pencil, and directs the chisel of the sculptor to bring new forms of grace and loveliness out of the shapeless stone, if it is He who inspires the Poet's song and touches with fire the Prophet's lips; above all, if the Love and Righteousness which are manifested on earth, and which are engaged in continual conflict with selfishness and wrong, are his Love and Righteousness—then I would say that the Enjoyment of God which is open to man is in truth bounded only by each man's capacity and power to receive; that turn where we may the means are there, the ways of access are open and unimpeded; and that it *is* therefore the chief end of man to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever!

II

THE SEVEN WORDS FROM THE CROSS

IT is natural to feel a special interest in the last words of famous men. Sometimes a greater importance is attached to them than they can fairly claim. How often, e.g., do we quote those words of the dying Goethe—More Light—said to have been the last that fell from his lips. Fit symbol though they were of a life spent in the search for Truth, spoken at such a time they can scarcely have been other than the natural request of one upon whom the shadows were beginning to fall for an increase of physical illumination. How often, too, have the uncertain utterances of the dying been taken hold of by priests or sectaries to draw a fresh testimony to faith from lips that in life, when the mind was fully awake, had expressed only denial or doubt.

One of the last victims of this misplaced

charity which would save a man against his will, by ascribing to him a faith which he had always repudiated, is, I understand, the famous philosopher John Stuart Mill. The only evidence in this case is that of the physician who attended him in his last illness, and who being himself of the evangelical persuasion would naturally be ready to seize hold of any word that could be converted into a confession of faith on the part of his distinguished patient. He is reported to have said that Mill 'died a believer,' and whatever he may have meant by that, it would naturally be interpreted as meaning a believer in orthodox Christianity. The thing is incredible—at any rate to those who do not very strongly wish to believe it. We know from his posthumous essays that Mill had a deep reverence for the character of Christ as portrayed in the synoptic gospels; that he repudiated the Fourth Gospel as a piece of scarcely intelligible Oriental mysticism, and rejected with it the whole supernatural scheme of the Christian theology. That he should have altered those views on his death-bed seems in the highest degree improbable. Even if it were proved that he had done so, the fact

would have no significance except to show how a great man's reasoning powers may be overthrown by illness and the approach of death.

I propose this morning to consider briefly, one by one, the last words of Jesus—the words spoken by him from his cross; or rather the words reported in our gospels as having been spoken by him. I make this correction for an obvious reason. There are seven such words—understanding by a word here a short sentence. Of these one is recorded by Matthew and Mark in agreement with one another. Three by Luke, who omits the first; while John with three more completes the seven. Now those who believe the gospels to be inspired, or to be even a consistent and uniformly credible history, are of course bound to accept the whole seven as the authentic utterances of Christ, however much they may be at variance with one another. But as we do not set out from that supposition we are not so bound. We are entitled to take each case by itself, and to consider the probability of its being genuine or otherwise, i.e., to inquire whether the word recorded is so suitable to the circumstances and so

thoroughly in accordance with all we know from every source about the last hours of the dying Saviour that we need not hesitate to accept it as having actually come from his lips, or whether it is on the whole more likely to have been invented for him and put into his mouth by his biographer.

And just here at the very outset we cannot help noticing one fact. Of all these seven words there is only one that is repeated even once. Considering that the evangelists are all engaged in telling the same story, considering also the numerous repetitions, especially in the synoptics, you would certainly have expected that, if not all the seven words, still several of them would be repeated two, three, or even four times. But it is not so. Luke knows nothing of the cry of agonized despair which is the only one mentioned by Matthew and Mark. John is wholly silent not only about this cry, but about the words recorded by Luke, while he gives three to the others quite unknown. Here therefore we are met by witnesses whose testimony if not contradictory is still very far from consentaneous.

Let us now, however, pass on to consider each word separately, and we will begin

with that which, as contained in our first two gospels and as evidently belonging to the primitive narrative which underlies them, has a primary claim to be considered authentic,—the great cry at the ninth hour—'*Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani*, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.' Both Matthew and Mark give these words in the original tongue, and both translate them into Greek. They are in fact a quotation from the twenty-second Psalm. Both also narrate the attendant circumstances in almost the same words. They agree as to the hour—the ninth—as to the darkness over the land from the sixth to the ninth hour, as to the mistake of the bystanders who thought Jesus was invoking the aid of the great prophet Elijah; —this arose from the fact that they spoke Greek, while Jesus quoted the words of the Psalmist not in Hebrew but in Aramaic. They agree further in the statement that one of them filled a sponge with vinegar, and having fixed it on a reed, offered it to the sufferer to allay his torturing thirst, at the same time calling to the rest not to interfere but to wait and see whether Elijah would come to deliver him. Also, that Jesus again cried with a loud voice as he breathed forth life.

This cry, being inarticulate, does not of course count in the seven unless, with the harmonists, we identify it with the 'It is finished' of John.

Of the authenticity of this first word, then, there seems to be fairly conclusive evidence. If anything in the gospels can be relied upon as authentic, this may. Such at least is the opinion of the learned critic, Prof. Schmiedel, who relies upon this as one of the few sayings which he would regard as the foundations for a thoroughly critical life of Jesus. Let us then look at it from this point of view. It was after six hours of agony—for it was at the third hour of the day—probably nine o'clock—that he was nailed to the cross—that Jesus gave way to what looks like despair. It was then he felt that he was forsaken by God. How did it come about? The suffering no doubt was terrible. But if Jesus had expected it, if he had known it must be, that it was for the salvation of the world, he would scarcely have permitted himself to utter words so inconsistent with his expressed readiness to drink of the cup which his Father held to his lips. This first word from the cross has, I am sure, been the cause of unspeakable

distress to many pious souls. Was Jesus really forsaken of God, or did he think he was? Did he really die in despair? Few, I suppose, would now be willing to resort to the old, horrible, explanation that in this moment Jesus was feeling the whole weight of the infinite wrath of God against sin, enduring vicariously the punishment that had been incurred by all the sins committed since the world began, and that the words in general express the consciousness of all this. But if not, there seems to be no escape from the inference that Jesus did—it might be only for a moment—but that he did despair of his cause, despair of himself, and believe that he was dying in vain. Nor is it difficult to understand how this should be. Jesus had come up to Jerusalem full of the faith that he was the Christ of God. As such he had entered the city amid triumphant hosannas. As such he had cleared the temple of the traffickers and their beasts for sacrifice. As such he had stood in proud silence before his accusers. He had borne patiently the first hours of agony assured that all would yet be well. But when he had hung six hours on the cross, and still no army of angels appeared in the sky, no

thunder burst from the dark clouds that hung over the land, no deliverer appeared, then the great heart began to break, and then the long silence was broken by that cry which cannot be interpreted otherwise than as a cry of despair. What does it prove? Only that Jesus was human. To use these words for any other purpose would be as wrong as to use the confession of a dying man, wrung from him in an hour of agony, as evidence of the truth of a creed which his whole life had belied.

At the same time I cannot say that these words ascribed to the dying Saviour by our first two evangelists are altogether above suspicion. In the first place they are a quotation. They are, as we have seen, a quotation from the 22nd Psalm. But that in itself is not much because the words are so simple and natural, that the sentiment could scarcely have been expressed otherwise. But the whole account of the passion seems to be accommodated to this and other passages of scripture. There you have (Ps. 69) the gall and the vinegar, (Ps. 22) the piercing of the hands and the feet, and the casting of lots upon his garments; and if we assume that the compiler of Matthew

had this Psalm in his mind, is it not possible that he was led in this way to put its opening words into the mouth of Jesus as appropriate to the situation ?

On the other hand, the genuineness of these words seems to be sufficiently guaranteed by the very fact that they constitute a hard saying. Would the evangelist have recorded them unless he had felt compelled to do so by his regard for truth ? What motive could have induced him to ascribe them to Jesus if he had not spoken them ? Unless indeed it was the desire to read the whole story in the Old Testament, but that would apply only to Matthew, not to Mark, who likewise records them. If at least he had our feelings, he would rather have wished to keep back these words, as betraying too much human weakness, than to make them at all prominent.

In a later age the cry from the cross was held to favour the gnostic view according to which the Christ principle—the Divine Logos—passed out of the man Jesus in the hour of his suffering, leaving him to endure the pangs of death, while he (the Christ) soared upwards to heaven. So, in the apocryphal gospel of Peter, instead of 'My

God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me,' we have ' " My power, my power, thou hast left me," and so saying he was taken up.'

We now pass on to Luke's three words. If the word we have been just considering is in any degree a stumbling-block to us, much more was it, evidently, to the third evangelist, for he omits it altogether. To say that he does so because it has been already twice recorded is preposterous, for Luke never thought of his gospel as one among four, but no doubt meant it to be *the* gospel. According to Luke the first word from the cross, and probably the harmonists would say that this *was* the first word, apparently spoken as soon as the body had been fixed to the cross, was 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Sublime words, which had they not been recorded, the loss to the world would have been irreparable! And yet I am bound to tell you that, critically speaking, this word is less certainly authentic than that which we have already considered. In the first place, it does not belong to the primitive narrative. There is no other authority for it than that of Luke. But have we even his? The margin

of the Revised Version tells you that some ancient authors omit the words. Westcott and Hort, the New Testament editors, bracket them as doubtful. They regard them as a very early interpolation—genuine as spoken by Jesus, but not having Luke's authority. Even assuming, however, that they are Lucan, that is by no means sufficient to prove their genuineness. How comes it that the other evangelists omit them? Then, we must consider that it seems to have been part of Luke's reading of history that in putting Christ to death the Jews acted in ignorance—as says Peter in Acts, after the healing of the lame man, 'And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.' And we may add, the sentiment expressed by these words—beautiful as it seems in the circumstances—when we come to analyse it, after all, falls short of the precept of Jesus to his disciples to forgive unto seventy times seven, not because of ignorance or on any other extrinsic ground, but simply because it is right and blessed to forgive. Perhaps, then, we shall do well to be satisfied with believing that Jesus was faithful to his own teaching, and truly forgave those who

put him to death, whether he did so on the ground of their ignorance or not, and whether or not he publicly proclaimed it.

The next 'word' is that addressed to the penitent thief—'Verily I say unto thee, to-day thou shalt be with me in paradise.' Here, we have a charming anecdote which we should be very unwilling to part with. And yet, here again also, we have only the authority of Luke. The other evangelists know of the two thieves ;—how is it no one else has recorded the penitence of one of them ? Where can Luke have got his superior information ? Perhaps some will say from Mary who told him all about the birth of her son. Yes, if we could believe the birth-story. But as Luke certainly composed that story out of his imagination, we cannot think it was beyond him to draw on the same source for another equally impressive. Besides Luke, as the Pauline evangelist, delighted in whatever went to illustrate and enforce the doctrine of repentance and forgiveness. It is he who gives us the parable of the Prodigal Son, that of the Pharisee and Publican, and who tells the story of Mary who kissed her Saviour's feet and was forgiven because she loved much. This dis-

position, it may be said, would account for his recording this example ; but it does not follow that he invented it. Perhaps that may be the best way to take it ; and at any rate we need not stumble at the word Paradise though at first it may somewhat surprise us to find it on the lips of Jesus. Paradise, it is well known, is a Persian word, i.e., the Greek form of the Persian word Pardes, which means a park or garden. It was, however, at an early period adopted by the Hebrews, and it occurs three times in the Old Testament, in Nehemiah, Canticles, and Ecclesiastes in the original sense of a park—translated 'orchard' in our Version. It occurs in Greek in the LXX as the garden which God planted in Eden for Adam. And so it came eventually to mean, and in the time of Christ it did mean, that part of Hades or the under-world in which the just waited for the Resurrection. In this sense it occurs not only in Luke, but in the Book of Revelation, where we have, in evident allusion to the Genesis story, 'To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.' Paul also uses the word once—in his second epistle

to the Corinthians, where he is giving an account of the revelations vouchsafed to him; but with him Paradise appears to be not underground but up above the clouds, for he speaks of himself as caught *up* into it. He first says he was caught up into the third heaven, but presently adds that he was caught up into Paradise, thus identifying the two. The Roman Catholic Church calls this place *Limbo*. From all this, then, it seems to be not impossible that Jesus might have used the word Paradise, might have said to the penitent thief, 'To-day thou shalt be with me in that place to which I am myself about to go to wait for my resurrection on the third day.' Would this calm assurance, however, be quite consistent with the state of mind indicated by the despairing cry? It might if it preceded it by some hours, and yet not on the supposition that Jesus expected not death but deliverance. Certainly, we can ill spare the episode of the penitent thief; but it must be admitted its authenticity does not seem very secure. Still, it is not impossible that Luke may have obtained it from some one who stood near the cross.

Luke's third word, 'Father, into thy hands

I commend my spirit,' must obviously have been also the last of the seven, if indeed these words were really spoken. But here again we are dependent entirely upon Luke. Matthew and Mark tell us that Jesus cried, or cried again, with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. The third evangelist has noticed this cry, but adds to it articulate words which are nowhere else recorded. Except the initial word Father, these words are also a quotation from the Psalms (Ps. 31,[5]).

Passing on now to John, we find that there are three more words, making up the seven. Seeing the importance attached to numbers by this evangelist, as indeed by the Jews generally, and especially the significance of the numbers three and seven, we are quite prepared to find these numbers recognized here. John would naturally give three words, and if he was acquainted with the other three gospels, as he probably was, it may have been with intention that he made the number up to seven.

But just as we saw reason to question some of the sayings added by Luke to the one word of the primitive story, still less of course can we rely on the authenticity of those recorded by a writer who has handled

the original story so freely. Least of all could this evangelist report the cry, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? unless he had done it in the gnostic sense meaning that now the divine Christ had fled, leaving Jesus in his purely human nature to suffer the pains of death. But then John could never have meant that, because the very thing for which he wrote his gospel was to prove that the divine Christ, the Logos, did not merely dwell in Jesus, as the gnostics said, but was made flesh in him, and could not therefore leave him save through the death of the body. It was impossible then for the fourth evangelist to do anything but pass over in silence an utterance so inconsistent with the idea he had formed of Christ's nature. John, all through his gospel, claims to have lived on terms of special intimacy with Jesus. He was the disciple whom Jesus loved, who leaned on his bosom at the supper, just as the Word was in the bosom of the Father. The fifth word carries on this intimacy, in a manner, beyond the death of Jesus. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing together by his cross, he said to his mother,

'Woman, behold thy son!' and to the disciple, 'Behold thy mother.' Of the fortunes of Mary, the mother of Jesus, after the death of her son, we know nothing from any other source than this. Did John take her to his home to live with him for the remainder of her days, notwithstanding that she had so many sons whose duty it might rather have been to take care of their mother, or is this a fiction of the writer to suggest still further how much the Master loved and trusted him? Even though the Apostle John had nothing to do with the composition of the gospel, the statement that he took Mary to his home may quite well rest on an authentic tradition. Still, it must be confessed we are here still only in the region of probability or conjecture.

The next word is accommodated to the fact stated by the other evangelists that, pitying the dire thirst from which the victims of the cross suffered, one of the soldiers filled a sponge with the vinegar or 'sour wine' which was the common drink of the Roman soldiers, and putting it on a long stalk of the hyssop plant, reached it up to him. It is now generally understood that those who were crucified were raised only a foot or

two from the ground, and not as commonly represented far above the heads of the crowd. Nothing could be more probable than that Jesus would complain of thirst, and that some of the bystanders would try to relieve him. Still we see here an accommodation to scripture. Indeed, John expressly states that it was in order that the scripture might be fulfilled that Jesus spoke the word 'I thirst.' 'After this Jesus, knowing that all things are now finished, that the scripture might be accomplished, saith, I thirst. There was set there a vessel full of vinegar (or sour wine): so they put a sponge full of vinegar upon a stalk of hyssop, and brought it to his mouth.' The reference is obviously to the twenty-first verse of Psalm 69—'And in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.'

It has been pointed out, however (by Dr. Edwin Abbott, in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*), and considering the symbolical character of the Fourth Gospel, it seems not improbable, that John's 'I thirst,' besides the obvious and literal, had also a secret meaning, and that this saying of Christ was in effect 'the expression of a "thirst" for that final accomplishment of God's will which would

enable him to say "it is finished," and then to break down the barrier of the flesh and to enter into unfettered communion with the Father.' In this case the scripture reference would rather be to the first verse of Psalm 63: 'My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land.'

And now we come finally to the last great word, or what would have been the last word, if it had been spoken—'It is finished.' 'When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, *Tetelestai*, It is finished; and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit.' Nothing could well have followed this word, and equally inappropriate is it that anything should have followed Luke's 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' The two are scarcely compatible with one another. If the harmonists unite them, the only effect is to convict both evangelists of gross inaccuracy. Let us, however, in concluding, pay a tribute to the grandeur and consistency of John's conception of the person of Jesus as the incarnation of the Divine Logos of God. No word could be more suitable as the crown and consummation of that life than one expressive of the accomplishment and completion of the work for which it had

been given—that work the salvation of the world—that word 'It is finished' already anticipated in the great prayer 'I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.' Yes, we are here, it is evident, far from the plane of history. The cry of despair was perfectly natural on the lips of the man Jesus, granting that he was in his nature as other men, and it is not to honour him less frankly to accept it seeing that it has been reported of him on evidence not easy to dispute. If the other words from the cross are more doubtful we must nevertheless be satisfied since it is not on the literal accuracy of every word we depend for the lessons the Bible has to teach us. 'It is finished,' however, would not have been inappropriate on the lips of the Nazarene Jesus any more than of anyone else who had faithfully completed his life's work, unless indeed in his case it might be truer to say that with his death his real work was not ended but begun.

III

THE ELEMENT OF THE BEAUTIFUL IN RELIGION

Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.—Ps. 29,[2].

THESE words, taken as they stand in our common English version, might be understood in two quite different ways. They might mean, and to most persons they probably do mean, that the worship of God requires no artificial accessories appealing to men's senses and their love of the Beautiful, but that holiness—the spirit of holiness—is of itself all the beauty and grace there need be, and better far than any outward adornment. Or they might be supposed to mean just the opposite of this, that in drawing near to God it is fitting for man to show his respect for the Being he worships by means of rich colours, gorgeous vestments, jewel-bedecked altars, and splendid architecture; and it would be natural if the Puritan understood them in the former sense, the Catholic Christian in the latter. It may be that the

words express more to us in English than was in the mind of the Psalmist; for the original words can scarcely be extended to either of the two senses I have indicated, though they are more in accordance with the second than with the first. The Revised Version, indeed, retains here the rendering of the Authorised Version, but gives in the margin what is certainly the more correct meaning, 'in holy array.' The reference is to the text, 'The priests were clothed in holy garments for glory and for beauty' (Exod. 28,[2]). This, however, is not the only place in which we find Beauty mentioned in connexion with the service of God. In another Psalm the writer expresses his desire to seek the beauty of the Lord in his temple, and in the ninetieth Psalm we have the phrase 'the beauty of the Lord our God,' where, however, the reference is probably to the character of the Deity—his graciousness—rather than to any adornments accompanying his worship.

I take these words, however, as a text for a discourse on the connexion of Beauty—or the Beautiful—with Religion.

The Beautiful has not always entered as

deeply into Religion as perhaps might be expected. Even to-day, when men's eyes have been so fully opened to the beauty of the world we live in, when people make long pilgrimages to feast their eyes on the grand or lovely scenes which others have described, when artists spend their lives in reproducing on canvas the thoughts and emotions that fill their minds as they gaze on nature in her loveliness, when no meanest flower by the wayside is without its poet to celebrate its worth, and pleasure in what is called the beauty of nature has become, we may almost say, the common possession of all men, this sense of beauty is very little associated with religion, it is not felt that by it we are brought into direct communion with God, or that it is a part of God's worship. We have been taught to say that God is *Love*. We have not yet learned to think that he is *Beauty*.

If we go back to the primitive forms of worship, we might be inclined to say that they were much more characterized by what to us at least seems ugly and repulsive than by artistic grace and loveliness. Was it that early man had no sense of the Beautiful or that he saw no connexion between Beauty

and worship? Truly, if the objects of his devotion were not themselves beautiful either morally or physically, the reverence shewn them was scarcely likely to clothe itself in beautiful forms. It is an old saying that it was Fear that first made gods on earth, and although we may not accept it as an adequate account of the origin of religion, it is undoubtedly true that the first gods were generally forms of terror, frightful in their aspect, as they were cruel and vindictive in their character, when they were not mere shapeless lumps of wood, or stone, or metal, which imagination endowed with life. It was the Greeks who first made the gods beautiful by clothing them in a human form idealized and wrought to the perfection of manly grace or womanly loveliness by the genius of the greatest artists that have yet appeared on earth. Then was seen the bright and glorious Apollo, the visible representation of the sun, shooting his arrows to slay the monsters of the prime, or send a pestilence among those who scorned his worship; Bacchus, 'ever fair and ever young,' the god of wine and revelry; the lovely Venus, with a whole Pantheon of others, and at the head of all the mighty

Zeus, or Jupiter, 'most glorious, most great,' with his ambrosial locks flowing over his shoulders, as Homer describes him, and besides, a thousand fair forms of Dryads, Oreads, Nymphs and Graces, haunting each wooded height, clear stream, or sunny fountain. And yet, strange to say, these same Greeks retained to the last their reverence for the fetishes which had come down from their barbarous ancestors, and which they preserved from common sight as too sacred to be touched or looked upon. Such, for example, was the Artemis, the Diana of which we read in the book of Acts, the image which fell down from Jupiter, and which all Asia and the world worshipped—it was a mere shapeless mass of stone or metal, probably an aerolite, in which case it did literally fall from the sky. The Pallas Athene at Athens, in like manner, was not at all, originally, the glorious figure conceived and executed by Phidias, but a mere block of olive wood, without shape and without beauty. The Jews all through their history aspired to make the temple of their God the envy and admiration of the world. Yet the inmost shrine which Jahve was supposed to hallow with his

presence, was but a cubical chamber, without furniture or ornament of any kind, though once, it is true, it contained the sacred Ark, in which were placed the two stone tablets, on which, as was believed, were inscribed the Ten Commandments of the law. These stones are now believed by scholars to have been old fetishes—remnants of the stone worship of early Israel.

We have here an example of the power of association and habit to give an adventitious value to things, far above their intrinsic worth. Have we not something similar in the modern feeling towards the Bible, the most impressive parts of which come so far short of what is greatest in the literature of the world, while there is so much that is both morally and spiritually at fault, profitable neither for reproof nor for instruction in righteousness, and yet we see the whole put above all other books as peculiarly holy and exceptionally inspired.

To what extent does Christianity, or the Christian Church, recognize the sense of the Beautiful as an element in Religion? It has been said of primitive Christianity—the Christianity of the Gospels—that it 'scorns beauty and despises knowledge';

but surely this is, to say the least, an exaggeration. Does not Jesus somewhere blame those who have taken away the key of Knowledge, who not only would not enter in themselves, but hindered others from entering? And I think I have read something about the lilies of the field which would seem to indicate that Jesus was not only himself deeply sensible of the beauties of the natural world but wished to awaken like feelings in the hearts of his disciples. It is true perhaps that in the early church there was little love of art, and but small appreciation of the beauty of nature; but how could it have been otherwise? Art was wholly in the service of heathenism—of those forms of worship which the religion of the cross was destined to destroy, and what delight could it be expected that those would take in nature, or nature's works, who, driven from the haunts of men, were compelled to carry on their secret rites in subterranean chambers remote from the light of day, and who were in daily terror of their lives. Art, however, did in time pass into the service of the church, and then there rose those grand structures, with their stately pillars, their immense arches,

their heaven-reaching spires, which still stand, the wonder and admiration of the world. Then the sculptor lent his aid, the same art which once had carved gods from the solid marble, now carving godlike men—the prophets, the saints, the martyrs of the faith. The painter set forth the story of man's redemption—the eternal motherhood, the eternal sacrifice, the eternal glory—and all the strange mythology of the church, in lines and colours that still charm and move us, though we may not accept the doctrines they illustrate. Then, as wealth increased, it was thought fitting that the service of God should be carried on in a manner at least as imposing as the state that attends on earthly sovereigns. The priests were arrayed in gorgeous robes; rich colours, and graceful designs, and sweetly intermingled lights and shadows, did much to relieve the gloom of the Religion of Sorrow, and spoke even to the heart of the unbeliever. It must be admitted, however, that at no time has the love of nature, or the sense of the beautiful in nature, been a prominent feature, if a feature at all, whether in the teaching of the church, or that of individual churchmen. The doctrine of the church was from the

beginning that this world is under a curse, and that its fate is after a few years to be destroyed by fire. The thoughts of the Christian people were never directed towards this world, or towards the scenery either of the earth or the sky as objects to be loved and admired on their own account, or even on account of their Maker. The world as it is was looked on as, upon the whole perhaps, the manufacture of the Devil rather than of God. The medieval artists devoted themselves chiefly to the painting of Madonnas, or of scenes from Scripture or the legends of the Church, and when they began to paint landscapes it was in the spirit in which they painted the old gods and goddesses, namely, the spirit of a revived Paganism. It was a good thing, however, that, on any terms, men's eyes did open at last to the glory of the world around them, and that they did come to see that God was not to be sought only in priestly rites and formal services, but that 'the invisible things of him from the creation of the world may be understood through the things that are made, even his eternal power and divinity.'

Puritanism, while rejecting and putting aside all the pomp and show and adventitious

adornments of Romanism, as inseparably bound up with and representing Popish doctrines and superstitions, did not make up for this deficiency, by encouraging a love of nature or a taste for any other forms of art. Its doctrine was that all that God requires is a penitent heart and a devout spirit, coupled, of course, with a sound faith, and that he can be worshipped as acceptably amid the four bare walls of the meanest conventicle, or in a private chamber, as in the grandest cathedral through the lips of chanting choirs—a doctrine perfectly true in itself, and perfectly conformable to the teaching of Christ, if it be meant only that such worship is abstractly possible, but not so far as it implies that man's devotional feelings may not be reached through his sense of the Beautiful, or by means of beautiful objects. Of Puritanism it is certainly true that it 'scorned beauty.' It neither accepted the aid of Art in the ministrations of the sanctuary, nor showed any special love or admiration for the works of nature. Pictures, images, even instrumental music, noble architecture, were all condemned as sensuous, Popish, soul-destroying. Nor was it to be supposed that much beauty could

be discovered in a world which was declared to be a mere vale of tears, and from which it was man's chief business to detach himself as completely as possible. Partly as the result of this state of feeling, but still more owing to the philosophy of sensation, mechanical theories of religion, and the growing materialism and secularism of the time, during the closing years of the eighteenth and the opening years of the nineteenth century, the æsthetic sense in man had to a great extent become atrophied, and the world, regarded as a mere piece of cunningly contrived mechanism, was empty of any soul. God was the great Artificer who by a skilful adaptation of means to ends, had made the world after the fashion of a watchmaker making a watch. Virtue was but enlightened self-interest, the doing of God's will for the sake of reward, the pursuit of happiness under difficulties—the preference of eternal happiness in heaven before a few years' happiness on earth, and the sense of the Beautiful arose from the adaptation of man's senses to the arrangements of the natural world, and was largely due to the association of ideas. It was a time when there was need for some one to arise to recall

men to more spiritual views both of their own nature and of the world in which they lived ; to remind man that he had a soul, and that the universe was something more than a piece of cunning mechanism ; that in it too there was a Divinity with which man himself might claim kindred. It was at such a time that the poet Wordsworth wrote his indignant sonnet in which he passionately declared that rather than rest in the worldly mechanical views of his time he would wish to go back to the old Pagan mythology which permitted him to see a Divinity in every rock, tree, or stream. 'Great God,' he exclaims—

> I'd rather be
> A pagan suckled in a creed outworn,
> So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
> Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn,
> Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,
> Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

No one has preached the divinity of nature more eloquently than Wordsworth. Yet he was followed by many others, and from his time a complete reaction set in, manifesting itself, in poetry, religion, philosophy, art, in every department of human thought and life. In religion it showed itself

in the reform of the church services, in the return to the Gothic architecture, in what is known as ritualism, in the demand for liturgical services, fine music, and whatever else might appeal to the æsthetic sense. But most of all it showed itself in a general awakening to the beauty of nature, an opening of men's eyes to the divine vision of the world, an unclosing of their ears to the sphere music which they could not hear as long as the 'muddy vesture of decay' clung too closely round them. In former days men thought much of the more striking and terrible of the phenomena of nature. They heard the voice of God speaking in the thunder; they saw him riding on the storm and directing the lightning. The psalm from which our text is taken is obviously the poetical description of a thunder-storm. The thunder is designated the voice of Jahve. 'The voice of Jahve is upon the waters; the God of glory thundereth; Jahve is upon many waters. The voice of Jahve is powerful; the voice of Jahve is full of majesty.' In these latter days we have learned to see God also in the springing corn and the falling leaf, in the dew and the rain, in the light of rising and setting suns, in the

sparkling fountain and the laughter of the sea, and in the Beauty which is diffused through all these things, and which through them speaks to our souls. But we have as yet hardly learned to think of him as not only the Source or Creator of Beauty, but as himself the Supreme or Absolute Beauty—in the sense in which he is also the Supreme and Absolute Love. And yet the great Saint Augustine came very near this thought when he said, speaking of the artists of his day—'The beauties which pass through the souls of artists to their fingers come from that Beauty which is over their souls, and for which my soul sighs by day and night.' Let us ponder these words for a moment. Beauty—that attribute, or quality of things which we call by this name, and which speaking to something corresponding in ourselves, gives us, shall I not say, our moments of most exalted pleasure—Beauty, I say, is not, as the eighteenth century philosophers taught, a mere thing of association and custom; but there is an eternal infinite Beauty far beyond anything we can imagine or conceive, and which the beautiful things of earth only very faintly reflect. This, I take it, is the true Platonic doctrine

which Augustine repeats, and which nearer our own time was also repeated by Emerson when he said, 'God has not created some things beautiful, but Beauty is the Creator of the world.' Nor let it be thought strange if God is said to be himself what would generally be called one of his attributes. Is not this language amply justified by that saying of John so often repeated that 'God is love'?

Beauty, it may be said, is an abstract quality which may *belong* to God, but how can it be God? But the same objection may be made to the statement that God is love, and yet for that we have the authority of the Apostle. There is also a saying of St. Bernard commended to us in the fine sonnet of Matthew Arnold, to the effect that where goodness and wisdom are, there God most surely is :—

> Yes, write it on the rock, St. Bernard said,
> Grave it on brass with adamantine pen,
> 'Tis God himself becomes apparent, when
> God's wisdom and God's goodness are displayed ;
> For God of these His attributes is made.

This is to me a very helpful and precious saying. To conceive God as described by the theologians—as an infinite, omnipresent

Being or Person, omnipotent, omniscient, and so forth, is confessedly beyond the power of the human mind; but we can all understand —a child can understand—what Wisdom, Justice, Love, Beauty are, as imperfectly manifested through human beings, or in the phenomena of Nature, and when you tell me that these are God—that God is Love, or Beauty, or Wisdom, there seems to be opened an access and pathway to the Divine which the simplest man or even the merest child can scarcely miss.

Some will perhaps say that after all the apprehension of Beauty *is* very much a matter of association and adaptation, and that we delight in beautiful forms and colours simply because the eye is so constructed that certain colours and a certain amount of light, neither too little nor too much, produce pleasing sensations; and we admire beautiful scenes, because they suggest pleasant thoughts, call up agreeable memories, or have been described in words that have ravished our ears. Were the eye differently made, the flowing line, the graceful curve, would cease to please. To the farmer there is nothing in nature more beautiful than a field of corn ripe for the sickle, while

to the eye of the labourer who has done most of the work, but expects little of the fruit, the sight affords but slender gratification. The Swiss peasant who passes his life amid the snows of the Alps and in daily peril from the descending avalanche which may some day swallow up his dwelling, finds little to please him in the scenes which the summer tourist has travelled hundreds of miles to look upon. It is impossible to deny or ignore the influence of association and habit. Still, if there *be* this adaptation of the arrangements of nature to our organism and through that to our mind—if the sights and sounds of the natural world *do* thrill us with emotions which lift us above the world and out of ourselves—does not this of itself suggest that there is something in us akin to the Life-Principle that animates the universe, and that the eternal Life is also the eternal Beauty no less than the eternal Love? After all, it is very much a question of individual experience. We know, on the authority of the poet, that there are those to whom 'a primrose by the river's brim' is 'a yellow primrose and nothing more'; but we know also, on the same authority, that there are others to whom 'the meanest

flower that blows doth bring thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.' To which class do you belong? If you find that through the contemplation of the Beautiful whether in art or nature, whether in the earthly sanctuary or in God's own temple of Infinitude, you are lifted into the nearer presence of the altogether Beautiful, that is enough; there is no more to be said. If not, all that remains is that you strive to get closer to the heart of the world, that you submit yourself more freely to the influences that flow from every power and every aspect of nature, or seek the aid of some high Prophet or Poet who shall inspire you with his thought, and send you forward on your way, until at length the vision divine shall break upon your sight, and through the transitory and short-lived beauties of this world you shall be borne upwards to that essential Beauty which is over our souls and which fades not away.

IV

THE DIVINE MOTHERHOOD

THE late Francis William Newman tells us that when, as a young Oxford student, he was arranging furniture in his new rooms he 'suddenly found a beautiful engraving of the "Blessed Virgin" fixed up.' Shocked at the sight, he being a sound Protestant, he went to the print-shop and begged its immediate removal, and then learned it had been ordered by his brother, the future Cardinal, then in English orders. 'I am sure,' continues Francis, 'he thought me an ungrateful brother; yet the more I ruminated, the more I judged that to resist from the beginning was my wisest way. . . . After this, he came out with an attack on *Protestants collectively*, saying that they forgot that sacred utterance, "Blessed art thou among women," and I answered, Dear John, I do not forget it, but I remember

also, that to like words from another woman, Christ replied, "*Yea, rather*, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it." Our Lord *did not approve* of honouring his mother.'[1]

It was a good and sufficient answer. Not that there is any harm in an engraving or picture of the Virgin Mary, whether with or without the child Jesus in her arms, in itself considered. As a symbol of Popery, as an idol to be worshipped, or even as suggesting, as in this case it was meant to suggest, that Mary, having been chosen to be the mother of Christ, is to be invoked as a mediator between God and man, it is no doubt objectionable. It is certain that there is nothing in the recorded words of Jesus, asking, or even remotely suggesting that honour should be paid to his mother. There is nothing in the New Testament requiring that any honour should be paid to the Virgin Mary beyond what would naturally be shown towards the mother of any great man. Indeed, the text quoted by Francis Newman sounds rather like a warning in anticipation against any such

[1] Contributions to the early history of the late Cardinal Newman, pp. 18, 19.

false worship. And as to the words of the Holy Spirit spoken to Mary through the lips of her cousin Elizabeth, 'Blessed art thou among women,' it is well to remember that the very same blessing—indeed in a still stronger form—Blessed *above* women—was pronounced by Deborah and Barak, also speaking through the Holy Spirit, on Jael the Kenite, who welcomed the defeated general Sisera to her tent, regaled him with lordly fare, and then as he lay asleep drove a great nail through his temples, and killed him.

But turning aside from the disputes of theologians and without yielding one jot of our protest against the pretensions of Popery so far as they threaten human liberty, may we not find something beautiful and of profound significance in this emblem of the Divine Mother and her Divine child, which, after all, is no exclusive possession of Rome, but rather belongs to universal religion? That it is of Pagan origin would, of course, be to many the very strongest objection possible; but not to those who have learned that all religions have grown out of the needs of man, and that there is something divine in every faith that has brought comfort and strength to human hearts.

Among the religions of the world, Judaism would seem to have stood almost alone in its entire exclusion, whether in more sensuous or more tender forms, of the female element—a characteristic to which no doubt it owed its moral purity, but which at the same time made it somewhat harsh and repellent, until with some of the later prophets Jahve assumed the attributes of the mother no less than the father of his chosen people. As says Isaiah, 'Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.' It was one of the causes of the frequent defections of Israel from the severity of the prophetic Jahve worship. It was a characteristic indeed which would seem to have been shared by one or two more of the Semitic cults; that of the Moabites, for example, whose god Chemosh was paired with no female divinity; but elsewhere, and generally speaking, wherever there was a god there was an accompanying goddess, whether wife or sister, or both, and not seldom the female took the chief place and received the highest honours. Beside the Tyrian Baal there stood the

great nature-goddess Astarte, Regent of the stars, the Queen of Heaven, and goddess of the moon, the mother of life and goddess of fecundity. 'Under the name of Astarte she was the guardian goddess of Sidon, and not essentially distinct from the Baaltis of Byblus, and Urania of Ascalon.' The Greeks identified this divinity as Queen of heaven with Hera, or Juno; 'yet they also recognized in her something of Athene, Aphrodite, Selene, Rhea, Artemis, Nemesis and the Moirai. In fact, she came nearest to the Phrygian Cybele. Sceptre and spindle in hand, she wore rays and a mural crown on her head, and the girdle too. Her golden statue rode next to that of Baal-Zeus, in a chariot drawn by lions; a precious stone, placed upon her head, illuminated the whole temple at night.'[1] It was Nature, the great Mother, out of whose teeming womb flow all the tribes of animated beings, whatsoever lives and grows, that was thus personified and made an object of enthusiastic worship. That the Greeks and following them the Romans worshipped the feminine nature in many a form of

[1] Rawlinson's Phœnicia.—The Story of the Nations, p. 115.

beauty or power needs hardly to be said.

But it is to Egypt we must turn to find the nearest approach to what afterwards became the favourite and most popular cult of the Christian peoples. Hardly will you go into any museum of antiquities without meeting with one or more bronze images of Isis carrying in her arms her babe Horus, any more than you will enter a Roman Catholic place of worship and not find an image or picture of Mary with the child Jesus. What is the difference? Are they not both—Isis and Horus, Mary and Jesus—symbols of the same thing—of Motherhood, the tenderest and most sacred tie that exists among men——of the divine motherliness with which Nature embraces and enfolds all beings? The worship of Isis appears to have exercised a singular fascination over the early Roman Empire. It proved especially attractive to women, and for a long time it might have seemed doubtful which would prevail—the Egyptian goddess whose power gradually extended over heaven, earth, and hell, or the peasant girl of Nazareth who carried her pitcher daily to the well, and became the wife of Joseph the carpenter.

It was not possible that 'the eternal

womanly ' should be kept out of Christianity. That Mary should eventually step into the place of Isis, of Cybele, of Astarte, should become the Queen of Heaven, the Star of the Sea, and be invested with all the attributes of a powerful divinity, lay in the nature of things and was in truth inevitable. The deification of Mary, in short, followed logically on the deification of her son. For this end, however, she had to be separated and set apart from all other women, and made the subject of special miracle.

How the story arose of the supernatural birth of Christ, whether it was of Jewish or heathen origin, has lately been a question among the critics, and the tendency at present is in favour of the latter view. There is no need, however, as I think, to assign it to any single source. It may quite well have sprung up spontaneously in heathen circles, and it is probable that it did ; while elsewhere, among converts from Judaism the famous passage in Isaiah must have had a decisive effect. The title Son of God, undoubtedly given to Jesus from the earliest times—repeatedly by Paul—would naturally be taken in the most

materialistic sense by those to whom there was nothing novel in the idea of a mortal being descended from a god. In the heathen world the idea was quite a familiar one. The most notable example of this in historical times was undoubtedly that of the great Alexander, who was declared by the oracle, and consequently popularly believed, to be the son of Jupiter. Whether he himself believed it is perhaps doubtful. On this point Plutarch tells us a pleasant anecdote, that once after a great thunder-storm, when the thunder had been rolling along the sky with terrific peals, one of his intimates jeeringly asked him if he, being Jupiter's son, could do anything like that ? In answer to which the King had the good sense merely to laugh and say that he would not like to frighten his friends in that way. Nevertheless it is certain that he visited the oracle of Jupiter Ammon in Africa and was there assured that he was the son of Jupiter ; and whether he himself believed it or not he was at least willing that others should. Nor, however ridiculous the idea may seem to us, let us jump to the conclusion that it must have appeared so to contemporaries. That it did not, indeed, is proved by the parallel

case in Christian story. If Alexander could not thunder like Jupiter, his deeds were such that he might well have seemed to be of no mortal parentage. When he set forth on his career of conquest he swept all before him with what was a mere handful of men compared with the teeming multitudes of the East. No doubt he found it for his advantage that men should take him for a god, and perhaps he half persuaded himself that he was one. It is not probable that in his lifetime anyone thought of Jesus as other than the son of Joseph the carpenter of Nazareth, but the facts that he habitually spoke of God as his father, even though it was in a purely religious sense, that as the Messiah he bore the title of the Son of God, that his earthly father was unknown to the earliest tradition, all conspired with the prophecy in Isaiah, which certainly cannot be left out of account, to suggest a more than human origin for him who was now seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high. And if the son was thus honoured, honour to the mother was bound to follow. It is true, as has been pointed out, that in the gospels Jesus pays no special honour to his mother. In John he even rather resents

her interference when he is about to turn the water into wine, saying to her, 'Woman,' or as we might translate, 'Madam (for certainly no disrespect is implied in the word), what have I to do with thee?' True it is also that Paul in all his epistles never once mentions Mary at all; but then Paul obviously knew nothing of those two charming legends of the Nativity preserved in our first and third gospels, which have so laid hold on the heart and the imagination of Christians, and which may be presumed to have originated what may be called the Mary cult in Christendom. For there can be no doubt that Mary in course of time became to all intents and purposes a great goddess, exercising an influence in the affairs of this world, more or less, it may be, according to the degree of superstition in the mind of the worshipper, as an intercessor with God, or with her son, and as a second mediator between God and man. For a long time there was a hot controversy in the Church whether Mary could properly be called the Mother of God, and it was eventually decided in her favour.

If the orthodox theory of Christ's nature be true, it is not evident why she should not. In the Middle Ages she was a prominent

object of adoration, and even to-day it may be doubted if the worship of the Virgin Mother is not still the most popular, the favourite form of devotion. Nor need it be denied that there is something humanizing and beautiful in this homage paid to a sweet and gentle woman, bearing in her arms the babe in whom the hope and the salvation of the world were enshrined. Is not every infant new born into this old world a Messiah charged with a blessed message from its home above, and every mother worthy of some share in the honour we pay to the Saviours of our race? So, I fancy, those great Idealists must have thought, whose art reaching the sublimest height in Raffaelle the divine, gave the world so many beautiful variations of the same theme—the Divine Mother carrying her Diviner Son, and shedding the grace and love of motherhood into so many receptive hearts. Who can say, indeed, in those dark times, in those fierce and bloody days, what an influence may have been exercised by this sweet image everywhere displayed, of perfect womanhood, of perfect motherhood, how many rough natures it may have softened, how many strong hearts it may have melted, what rude

manners it may have corrected, what love and tenderness and charitable feeling it may have excited! To the Catholic Christian of those days the Father might represent the sternness of inexorable law, the Son the self-devotion of him who gave himself up as a voluntary sacrifice for the salvation of the world; but Mary was the type of those motherly feelings—of that softness and tenderness and readiness to anticipate and supply the wants of others before her own—in short, that Motherliness which is more than all beauty of form or outward adornments, and which alone can redeem life from sordidness and selfishness.

And now, in conclusion, is it not rather remarkable that it was reserved for a preacher and divine of the nineteenth century to apply to the Deity that epithet which confessedly is the tenderest known on earth? Theodore Parker habitually addressed God as 'Thou who art our Father and our Mother too'! There are, alas, families, in which the name of Father is associated with little that is gentle and loving, children to whom that name stands chiefly for sternness and severity, but they are rare indeed, if they exist at all, in which

the word Mother suggests aught but the tenderest love and care. Let us, then, worship the Unseen Power as our Father *and* our Mother—neither term so applied can be aught but a symbol—and thus we shall best combine perfect justice with boundless love in our idea of Him whom no language known to man can adequately express.

V

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

AN EXPOSITION OF JOHN IX

THE subject of the present discourse is the healing of the man born blind, as related in the ninth chapter of John's gospel. Few, I imagine, can have much difficulty in understanding this narrative as an allegory, intended to set forth the glory of the Divine Word as the Light of the world, as is explained in the closing verses of the chapter; or if any have they may be reminded that we have warrant enough for allegorical interpretations in the New Testament itself. Speaking of Abraham's two sons, one of whom was the son of a bondwoman, namely, Hagar, Abraham's servant—the Apostle Paul says (Gal. iv. 24, 25), 'Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, bearing children unto bondage, which is Hagar. Now this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and

answers to the Jerusalem which now is ; for she is in bondage with her children.' That is an example of the exegesis of those days, and I am not quoting it as an example of good exegesis, but simply to show that to take a scriptural narrative in an allegorical or figurative sense is a thing which has the sanction of scripture itself. The allegorical method of interpretation, in fact, was very common in those days. There is plenty of it, for example, in the writer known as Philo Judæus. Of course it was often misapplied ; for, except perhaps the first few chapters of Genesis, there is not much of the Old Testament narrative which can properly be regarded as allegorical, and probably even these chapters were *meant* to be taken literally. As the world advanced in knowledge, however, the literal sense of many passages in the sacred writings became repugnant to the reason, or in conflict with the moral feeling, of mankind, and then inward and hidden meanings were laboriously sought for. No doubt a great deal of ingenuity was thrown away in this pursuit, and it would be a pity if such an erroneous method were revived at the present day. It is a different thing, however, when an author has only thinly

veiled his meaning in a matter-of-fact narrative, as is the case with the parables, for example, and this, I hold, is precisely what the author of the Fourth Gospel has done in this chapter, which indeed is practically just a parable told by the evangelist.

It is true the story is told with a great deal of verisimilitude. The calm demeanour of the Saviour as he passed along regardless of the hostility of those who were ready to stone him, the circumstantial details of the means adopted to effect the cure—his spitting on the ground and making clay of the spittle, anointing the eyes of the blind man with the clay and then sending him to wash it off in the pool of Siloam—the eager questions of the 'neighbours,' with their doubts whether this was really the same man to whom they had so long been accustomed to give alms, the phlegmatic answers of the beggar to the questions of the Pharisees—'whether he be a sinner I know not; one thing I know that whereas I was blind now I see'—the cross-examination of the parents, the expulsion of the blind man from the synagogue, and finally his confession of faith and his worship of the Saviour—all these things are told with such an air of

reality that they irresistibly impress the mind of the simple reader with a sense of the literal truth of the narrative. And on this ground the story has been constantly made use of as a convincing proof of the reality of the miraculous power exercised by Christ. Here, it is said, is a case about which there can be no shadow of doubt. Here is a miracle which depends not on the word of the evangelist, who might be merely reporting a hearsay tale, or might be mistaken in what he fancied he had seen, but which has been most thoroughly established on the witness both of the subject of the miracle himself, of his parents, and of the people who knew him, and that after the most searching examination of all concerned; and which could not be denied even by the bitterest enemies of Christ. But it is hardly necessary for me to point out the fallacious character of this reasoning. Renan and others have complained that in the case of none of the scriptural miracles was there anything like a scientific investigation, and it must be feared the present case forms no exception to the rule. An examination by experts there certainly was not. But have we even the authentic testimony of the

different persons who figure in the narrative? Why, if these were the depositions taken upon oath before a magistrate, of the blind man, of his parents, and of the neighbours, apologists could hardly make more of them than they have done! Of course, we have nothing of the kind. We have merely the testimony of the evangelist as to what these persons said, and the evangelist might have been mistaken, his ears might have deceived him, or his memory, seeing he wrote long after the event, might have failed him. At the same time, I admit, if we were sure that John was reporting what he had actually seen and heard, this evidence would be of great weight. But if he is writing an allegory—wrapping up spiritual truth in a material envelope of his own devising? There is surely nothing in this narrative—no degree of verisimilitude, which would be beyond the capacity of any clever writer of modern days! True, it may be said; but would the evangelist have deceived his readers by putting before them a fictitious narrative bearing all the appearance of a true story? From the modern point of view this may certainly seem to be a real difficulty, but not so much if you consider that the East

is the home of allegory, apologue, and fable, and that instruction was generally conveyed in this way. Jesus himself, we all know, taught by parables, and one of his biographers even makes him declare that he did so on purpose that outsiders—those without—might not understand him! Now, it is clear to me, and I am surprised it has not been pointed out before—I have never seen it pointed out—that John all through this gospel has in view two distinct classes of readers—those to whom 'it was given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God,' and those that were without—in technical language, the esoteric and the exoteric, or, as Paul would have said, the carnal and the spiritual. The outward marvel was for the one class, for those who would not believe without signs and wonders, the inward spiritual meaning for the other. And observe that it is one of John's special characteristics to support his narrative of miraculous events by confirmatory evidence, as in the case of the nobleman's son, where he states the exact hour at which the fever left him, and then points out—as though a careful investigation had been made—that it was at the very moment when Jesus spoke

the healing words 'Thy son liveth.'[1] It was also John's habit to emphasize the material in the strongest words, as if he was not afraid of it, or afraid of the consequences, in order that the spiritual might shine out more brightly. Thus, it is he who puts into the mouth of Christ the strong, to us almost offensive, phrase, 'Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life.' Do you suppose that was meant to be taken literally? That, of course, is impossible, and in truth all these strong materialistic phrases are intended to introduce and lead up to the grand spiritual announcement, 'It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.'

The story of the healing of the man born blind in John is obviously founded on the account in Mark, which tells how at Bethsaida a blind man was brought to Jesus with the request that he would touch him. 'And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he

[1] Think too of Thomas putting his finger into the print of the nails, and thrusting his hand into Christ's side!

asked him if he saw aught. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that he put his hand again upon his eyes, and made him look up; and he was restored and saw every man clearly.' This is a very curious narrative, and has several interesting features. The gradual restoration of vision, for example, or rather the incipiency of vision, for this man may have been born blind, though it is not said so, his seeing men at first as tall as trees, just as a baby has no sense of size or distance, then the use of means to effect the cure, and his being led out of the town where there would be no eager throng of spectators to interfere. These two last incidents John has used in his own way. He even exaggerates the material means by making Jesus make clay of the spittle to anoint the blind man's eyes, but instead of leading him out of the town Jesus *sends* him to a pool whose name signifies sent, and awaits his return. The object of the Johannine Christ is, of course, to show forth his glory; the object of Mark's Christ on the other hand is to *hide* it at least in the meantime, and so he, on the contrary, commands the man *not* to go into the town or tell what had occurred to any person. And

in point of fact we hear no more of him.

The healing power of the saliva was one of the curious superstitions of the physics of those days. It was by this means that the Emperor Vespasian healed a blind man and a man with a withered hand at Alexandria, as at least was currently reported and believed at the time. The story is thus gravely told by the historian Tacitus: 'A certain man of the lower orders in Alexandria who was well known to be afflicted with a disease in his eyes threw himself at the Emperor's feet, begging him with groans to cure his blindness; he said he had been admonished to come to him by the god Serapis, the chief object of worship of that superstitious people, and he prayed the prince that he would condescend to sprinkle his cheeks and eye-balls with his spittle. Another whose hand was crippled, by the advice of the same god, begged that it might be trodden on by the foot of the Cæsar. Vespasian at first laughed, treating the matter with contempt; but as they became more urgent he hesitated, now fearing he might get a character for vanity, now tempted by the entreaties of the men themselves and the assurance of his flatterers to

hope some effect might be produced. Finally he ordered the physicians to be consulted whether such blindness and debility were capable of being cured by human means. The doctors differed in their opinions, but argued that in the case of the one man the sight was not wholly gone and would return if the obstacles were removed; as to the other his joints were much distorted, and if healing power were applied, they might be restored. This was perhaps the will of the gods, and the prince had been chosen to a divine ministry. Finally, if the cure succeeded the glory would be the Emperor's, if it failed, only the wretched men themselves would be laughed at. Accordingly Vespasian thinking there was nothing out of the reach of his good fortune, and nothing any longer incredible, putting on a cheerful look, amid the eager expectation of the crowd, does what was required of him. Immediately the hand was restored to use, and daylight flashed upon the blind eyes. Both cases,' dryly remarks the historian, using the very argument of Paley in the case of the scriptural miracles, 'are declared by those present to be true, even now when there is nothing to be gained by a lie.'

No doubt there are other reasons for propagating a lie than the hope of reward. Those who have once committed themselves to a falsehood will generally adhere to it for the sake of consistency; and by repeating it often enough will come more or less to believe it themselves.

The story in Tacitus might furnish a fine opportunity to the apologist for drawing a contrast between the false miracle and the true—the cure, or supposed cure, of a man whose sight was merely obscured, and that of one proved on the evidence of his parents to have been actually born blind; between the hesitation and doubts of the Imperial miracle-worker and the sublime confidence of the true prophet; but as we are taking the Bible story as an allegory, we cannot of course avail ourselves of that opportunity. I confess I am rather tempted to ask if the evangelist had any proper idea of what it was to be born blind—if he understood that it meant either to be wholly without the organ of vision, or to have it in a very imperfect or diseased or undeveloped form. He speaks all through as if he merely thought of the eyelids being sealed, while the eye itself lay unimpaired and ready for use

behind them. It is everywhere a question of the man's eyes being opened. Of course, that may be a mere figure of speech, but one cannot be sure that John had quite realized all the conditions of the miracle, nor indeed is the matter of any particular consequence.

Let us now, however, follow rapidly the story of the evangelist. At the outset a question is at once raised which at that time was of great importance, and on which there was much need for new light. 'Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' It was the belief of the Jews, as is well known, and it is a belief in which Christians have often shared, that every affliction is a punishment for sin; and we have here the same question raised as is raised in the gospel of Luke in regard to those on whom the tower in Siloam fell. By the way, it is remarkable enough that, as there we have the tower in Siloam, so here we have the pool, and who can say but the passage in Luke gave the hint to John? Jesus does not admit that those on whom the tower fell were sinners above all the men that dwelt in Jerusalem, but still does not say, as is sometimes assumed, that they were not sinners, nor even that it was not for

their sins they were slain. For he adds, in reply to his questioners, 'Unless ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.' We have here a distinct advance on that position. He says here plainly, 'Neither this man hath sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him.' But what, it may be asked, can the disciples have been thinking about when they put such a question to their Master; how could they have supposed that congenital blindness could possibly be a punishment for any sin on the part of the man himself? Could he have committed a sin before he was born? The question is a very natural one, and it has always been a source of perplexity. Some have thought that the question 'did this man sin or his parents?' does really point to a belief in a pre-existent condition of souls, so that if Christ had answered 'the man sinned' he would have been understood to say that he was now suffering for sins committed in some previous life. But again it is denied that there was any doctrine of re-incarnation among the Jews so early as the time of Christ. On this, however, it is open to remark that the evangelist could not but be familiar with the doctrine of the

soul's pre-existence as taught by Plato, and as he himself is the author of the question which he ascribes to the Jews, this may very probably have been in his mind. Again, it may have been meant that the infliction might be for a sin which the man *would* commit in his after life ; but this seems too repugnant to the Jewish idea of Divine justice, and some, therefore, would have the question read in this way, ' Who did sin, this man, or—since that is plainly impossible—his parents ? ' In any case, the answer ascribed to Jesus, that the man was born blind solely in order that he might be made the subject of a great miracle, could not, on the hypothesis of the historical truth of the narrative, strike us as a peculiarly happy one. We know, of course, that all such answers are beside the mark, and that the true explanation is one which was impossible at that time, in which there was as yet no adequate sense of the constancy of nature, and consequently no science save in the most rudimentary form. The true answer is that all physical evils have their causes in the laws of the physical world, and that it is only by studying those laws and learning to control them that we can either mitigate

or avert the evils. It is quite true, however, that physical evils are often the result of sin, if by sin you mean culpable neglect of those laws on the observance of which depend health, happiness, and peace of mind. It is true also that children often suffer for the sins of their parents, and that the iniquities of the fathers are visited upon the children even, it may be, I suppose, to the third and fourth generation. Still, it is equally true that there is a great deal of suffering in this world where there has been no sin—or no sin as entering into the cause—whether on the part of the sufferer himself or his parents, and the only reason we can give why it should be so is that it is better for us in every way, and essential to our growth in moral power, that we should live in a world of fixed and ascertainable relations, than in a world governed by chance and caprice.

To return to the blind man. Having washed, as he had been instructed, in the pool of Siloam outside the walls of Jerusalem, he came back looking so different that the neighbours were not sure of his identity. Satisfied, however, by his own assurances that he was really the man they knew so well, they brought him to the Pharisees to see

what they would say about his healer, the more because it was on the sabbath day the cure had been effected. This is not the first time John has introduced the sabbath question, his object being to show that Jesus set little store by Jewish observances. The Pharisees argued that he could not be of God because he had broken the sabbath, but there was the fact of the miracle which they could not deny staring them in the face, and many were so far convinced that they argued that the man who had wrought such a miracle could not, at any rate, be a sinner. The blind man himself on being appealed to as to the character of him who had opened his eyes, answered curtly enough, 'He is a prophet.' Some, however, are not yet satisfied that the man had been really blind until they call his parents. They give unhesitating assurance that this is indeed their son, but are too cautious to express any opinion as to his cure. They are quite sure that he was born blind, but by what means his sight had come to him they know not—they will not say at least, lest they should be drawn on to make other admissions, and by confessing that Jesus was what he claimed to be, incur the terrible sentence of ex-

communication. The blind man too is remarkably cautious. Whether his benefactor is a sinner or not he will not undertake to say; but there is one thing of which he is quite sure—about which he has no shadow of doubt—that whereas he *was* blind he *now* sees. That was a fact from which the Pharisees might draw their own inferences. The blind man's reasoning, when he is still farther pressed, is irresistible—'We know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one born blind. If this man were not from God he could do nothing.'

Having no answer to make to this reasoning the Pharisees resorted to the argument of force and expelled him from the synagogue, not without rebuking him for his presumption in daring to make himself their teacher. 'Thou wast altogether born in sin and dost thou presume to teach us?' And they cast him out. And then it was that Jesus came and revealed himself in all his gracious benignity as the Son of God. 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? Thou

hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe, and worshipped him. And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see and that they who see might be made blind.'

It is certainly a very vivid and life-like scene. And yet it is so unlike anything in the other gospels—it was so contrary to the whole method of Jesus as shown to us there to seek his own glory, and proclaim himself as the Messiah, seeing he is ever anxious to avoid observation and prevent any report of his miracles being carried abroad, that we cannot for a moment hesitate as to the unhistorical character of the narrative. And can we indeed fail to perceive that all through this story it is the Pharisees who are presented to us as the truly blind? There was the light of the world shining right in their midst, walking amongst them in human form, and they either could not or would not see it. A far worse than physical blindness afflicted them, and one which because they were unconscious of it, was far more difficult of cure. The man physically blind was at least aware of his infirmity, and so took the means provided to have it removed.

Those morally blind men were the teachers of Israel, the children of Abraham, the favourites of God, and were they to be taught by one of whom they knew not whence he came, nor what his credentials were? For them, unless their pride could be pulled down, there was no hope of cure. 'Are we blind also,' they cried. 'If ye were blind,' Jesus answered rather enigmatically, 'ye would have no sin; but now ye say, we see; therefore your sin remaineth.' He meant, no doubt, that if the light had never come to them—if they had been left without any opportunity of seeing the truth—they would have been excusable. But now since with open eyes they refused to see and make use of the light, their sin remained. It was but saying in John's language what is said more plainly in the Sermon on the Mount, 'If the light that is in thee be darkness how great is that darkness.' The true light of the world—is it not the Divine Reason which according to the proem of this gospel, lighteth every man coming into the world—Reason the divinest part of man—the universal light which shines in every age, and will shine on, more and more, we doubt not, unto the perfect day?

VI

THE LAW OF RETRIBUTION IN GREEK TRAGEDY

WHEN I was a student at Manchester College more than fifty years ago, it was the custom to read with the Professor some Greek book of the age in which the New Testament was written. One such book was Plutarch's essay (*De sera Numinis vindicta*) on the Delay of Providence in the punishment of crime. It is a problem which confronts every sceptical age. About the certainty of Divine retribution, however, even though its delay in many cases might need explanation, the pious Plutarch, who seems to have held a brief for Providence, had no doubt, any more than had the first two of the great Attic tragedians. An exception, of course, must be made of the rationalist Euripides. That there is a law of retribution working in the world, that evil deeds will

sooner or later bear evil fruit, and indeed have within themselves the seeds which will ultimately bring ruin upon the wrong-doer, that the wheel will at last come full circle, crushing all before it, and sometimes involving the innocent in common destruction with the guilty—is not this the great lesson of the Greek, indeed of all tragedy—of Lear, Macbeth, and Othello, no less than of Œdipus, Antigone, or Medea? Yes, and of the tragedies we see around us every day. The study of history, or of contemporaneous events, may teach us that moral retribution works itself out mainly through man, through human endeavour under the lead of conscience and the sense of right; but this does not imply that there is not behind and above man, a Principle inspiring and guiding him, of which he is the servant. For this Principle the poets retained the old mythological name of Zeus (whence the Latin Jupiter, or Diespiter—Zeus-pater), but with them Zeus had become pretty much all that we mean by God. Indeed, if it would be true to say that in some of his plays the theology of Shakespeare is more than half pagan, it would be equally true to say that that of Sophocles writing not less than four hundred

years B.C., was at least not less than half Christian. The religion of Greece was, of course, polytheistic at that time, and the poets could not directly set themselves, nor could they have wished to set themselves, against the popular faith, but in their recognition of the supremacy and almightiness of Zeus, they were to all intents and purposes monotheists, and those who are acquainted with the Antigone of Sophocles will remember one magnificent choral song in which, describing the universality of the moral law and its dependence upon, indeed almost identity with, Zeus, the poet reaches a height of sublimity which it would be hard to match from the psalms or prophets of the Hebrews. In plain prose it reads :—

'What daring pride of mortals, O Zeus, can control thy power, which neither the sleep that maketh all things old, ever touches, nor the unwearied mouths of the gods! Through unwasting time, enthroned in might, thou dwellest in the dazzling blaze of Olympus. For the instant, the future and the past, this law will suffice'—here, unfortunately, the text becomes corrupt, but Campbell's poetic version gives what seems to be the sense—

> This was in the beginning, and shall be
> Now and eternally,
> Not here and there, but everywhere,
> A law of misery that shall not spare.

A law of misery that will not spare even the innocent that come into conflict with it; and it was part of this law that involuntary crime would work out its punishment and bring ruin on the perpetrator quite as surely as that which was intentional and committed with full consciousness of wrong.

Take, for example, the well-known story of Œdipus. All unwittingly, he killed his father, having met him as a stranger in a defile where their chariots could not pass, and afterwards took his father's widow, his own mother, to wife. In so doing he was but fulfilling the words of the oracle and his own destiny. Nevertheless, the crime had to be expiated, and retribution was bound to come. The Nemesis was in this case long delayed, but it fell at last when a pestilence wasted the land, and through the divination of the blind old prophet Tiresias, the awful truth was brought to light. Nor can it be said that Œdipus was altogether blameless in the first instance. Innocent of the crime of parricide (in intention) he certainly was;

but not of giving way to unreasonable anger, of losing what to the Greek was ever the first of virtues, his self-control. He should not have struck the old man he met in the pass on the road to Delphi. That blow was the beginning and the source of all his troubles.

But here we may recognize the power of Destiny which plays so great a part in the Greek tragedies, though not greater perhaps than it does in those of Shakespeare, and shall I add also in the life of us all. For, reconcile it how we may, while we can never free ourselves from the sense of responsibility for our actions, we are equally conscious of an element of Fate—of inevitableness—entering into our life, and into the life of all men, presenting us with the ever-recurring picture of—

> Poor humanity's afflicted will
> Struggling in vain with ruthless Destiny.

I have just referred to the story of Œdipus. It is well known to have been the foundation of the three greatest dramas of him who was—

> The mellow glory of the Attic stage,
> Singer of sweet Colonos and its child—

Sophocles, born in the Attic deme, or district, of Kolonos, a suburb of the famous city of

Athens. The three plays are King Œdipus, at present, through the enterprise of Mr. Martin Harvey, being performed at Covent Garden Theatre in London;[1] Œdipus at Kolonos, and the Antigone, well known in England through Miss Helen Faucit's interpretation. For many years, and until his four children had reached maturity, Œdipus reigned prosperously in Thebes. Then came the discovery of his unconscious crimes, whereupon in a frenzy of despair and rage he dashed out his eyes, and went into voluntary exile, accompanied by his two daughters Antigone and Ismene. He found a retreat in the grove of the Eumenides at Kolonos. His two sons, Eteocles and Polynices, now both claim the vacant throne, but agree to divide the sovereignty between them, reigning year and year about. On the expiration of the first year, however, Eteocles refuses to give up the crown to his younger brother, and thereupon Polynices, having secured the friendship and support of Adrastus, King of Argos, comes with an army against

[1] In, I regret to say, a *rhymed* version by Professor Gilbert Murray. The best translation, in my opinion, is that of the late Professor Lewis Campbell, of St. Andrews.

Thebes. The assault having failed, and victory not having declared for either side, it was then agreed to decide the contest by single combat between the two brothers, with the result that both were slain by each other's hands. Kreon, as next of kin to Œdipus, being his brother-in-law, now assumed the reins of government, and forthwith issued a proclamation that the body of Eteocles should be buried with all due honour, but that no one, on pain of death, should bury, or pay any honour to, him who had come to lay waste his fatherland, and set fire to his native city, but that his body should be suffered to lie where it fell, a prey to the dogs and vultures that feed on carrion flesh. Such is the situation from which grows the third of the three great dramas of Sophocles. Then out of this welter of blood and crime rises in solemn majesty the sublime figure of Antigone—surely one of the most perfect creations of the Greek, or, indeed, shall I say, of all tragic art—the young maiden, who, in pure disinterested love, defying the prohibitions of unjust authority, knowing she is risking everything worth living for, yea, life itself, goes forth alone, unfriended, to pay the last duties to her brother's corpse.

Is not Antigone a perfect woman? Full of womanly feeling, devoted to her aged father, to her sister, to her brothers, not ashamed to confess that she is looking forward to a happy marriage, she is at the same time possessed of heroic courage, and is ready to sacrifice all in obedience to the higher law. If she has any fault at all—and to make her truly human she should not be entirely faultless—it lay in a certain harshness towards her sister whose weaker will was unfitted to contend with men, or to resist the proclamation of the king. In this respect, however, I venture to think she contrasts favourably with Isabella in 'Measure for Measure,' whose language to her brother savours rather too much of the pride of self-conscious virtue. It is well known that Sophocles, comparing himself with his rival Euripides, declared that he drew men as they ought to be, Euripides as they were. If it is necessary that there should be a flaw in the character of Antigone to bring her within the compass of humanity, we may rejoice if such a flaw has been found.

Few finer things have come down to us in the remains of Greek literature than the protest of Antigone against the inhuman

proclamation of Kreon, and her assertion of the imperative nature and divine origin of the law in her own breast.

How durst thou, asks Kreon, transgress the published law ?

And Antigone replies :—

I heard it not from Zeus, nor came it forth
From Justice, where she reigns in the under-world.
They too have published to mankind a law.
Nor could I think thine edict of such might
That one who is mortal thus could overrule
The infallible, unwritten laws of Heaven.
Their majesty begins not from to-day,
But from eternity, and none can tell
The hour that saw their birth.

It is worth noting the importance attached here and elsewhere to the underground Powers. That this eternal Law should issue from Zeus seems natural, but it comes also, we find, from Justice who dwells with the beings below. It is true Kreon taunts Antigone with her excessive love for Hades and those beneath—but all through we find the infernal world and its inhabitants entering into people's minds as something in which they were intimately concerned, and taking much the same place in their thoughts as Heaven does with us. Why indeed was it deemed of so much importance to bury

Polynices, except that the neglect was preventing his spirit entering its place of rest? It may be noticed too that in one passage, perhaps unique in Greek literature, Antigone expresses the hope so dear to the Christian, of meeting again in the after life those she had loved on earth :—

> Most surely
> Dear will my coming be, father, to thee,
> And dear to thee, my mother, and to thee,
> O brother mine.

No doubt, Cicero in a much later age, but still before Christianity, expressed the hope of meeting in another world, both the great men of the past and also his own son prematurely taken from him.

Returning for a moment to the character of Antigone, it is true that when she is led forth to die, to be conducted to her living tomb, she bewails her hapless fate ; but as the late Justice Talfourd has remarked, 'This lingering farewell to hope and existence, is so far from detracting from her dignity, that while it deepens the pathos of the situation, it elevates her character. To make the sacrifice of life really heroic, the person resigning life must have learned something of its value. As few comparatively

feel existence in its true worth, the courage commonly admired is not the subjugation of the fear of *death*, but only of the apprehensions of *dying*. It was otherwise with the immortal heroine of Sophocles; she had counted the cost of her virtue. With the full tide of life rushing healthfully through her veins; with a deep consciousness of her existence and its value; with pleasing hopes just unfolding; in the very bloom of her youth—she deliberately resigns her earthly being to accomplish the interment of her brother.' According to this writer Antigone 'exhibits the most glorious perfection of the female character. Her heroism springs not from ambition, nor suggests a masculine spirit, but has its root in the purest affection, the most disinterested of loves. Sophocles in this play'—the rest of the passage is also well worth quoting—'has shown that in an age when women were scarce regarded as reasonable beings, he estimated the true nobleness of the female heart. Excepting Alcestis, there is no female portrait in all the works of antiquity which approaches this. Women are usually represented by the Greeks as weak or wicked. If we pass by the Clytemnestras and Medeas as

anomalous, we shall find little to venerate in the Electras, the Andromaches, the Hecubas, and the Helens. As the heroism of Antigone is without rival, so the vengeance exacted for her death is almost without example. The whole family of the tyrant fall; even his wife, as Schlegel has observed, who was never heard of before, is introduced, that she may perish.'[1]

In contrast with this pure, calm figure of heroic womanhood the poet has placed the timid, selfish, long-winded old woman of a sentinel or watchman, whose anxiety to screen himself from all blame in the matter of burying the corpse and save his own skin, can hardly have failed to draw a laugh from the quick-witted Athenian audience. The Attic tragic drama did not demand or permit, like the Shakespearean, the introduction of a clown or jester, to soften the horrors of the scene and relieve the feelings of the spectators;—the Greeks of course had their comedies which were wholly given up to mirth and satire—but the sentinel in the Antigone probably approaches as nearly to a comic character as the stately genius of the ancient tragedy would tolerate; and one

[1] Enc. Met.: Greek Literature, pp. 95, 96.

cannot but be amused at the complaisance with which, on bringing in his prisoner, he credits himself with pitying a 'friend' in misfortune, while we despise the meanness and cowardice manifested in the fact, so impudently avowed, that he values nothing in the world before his own safety.

We come now to Kreon, next to the heroine, the most important character in the drama—indeed strictly its central figure, inasmuch as it is on his inhuman proclamation the whole action hinges; it is his inveterate and unreasonable obstinacy that brings about the dire catastrophe. In this great drama we see the divine Nemesis working itself out through purely natural causes. Kreon has been unreasonable from the first. Polynices had come to lay waste the lands of the Thebans and destroy their homes. True; but he had come in vindication of his own right of which he had been robbed by his brother. Eteocles was the wrong-doer, and therefore the primary cause of the strife. At all events a decently humane man would not have carried his enmity beyond the grave, but would have sanctioned, at least not prohibited, equal honours being paid to both. And if this was the view of

an Athenian audience in those days—and we may infer that it was, for our sympathies are altogether with those who violate the proclamation—it speaks well for the growth of humane feeling among the Greeks four hundred years B.C. But Kreon's inhumanity does not stop with the proclamation, for disobeying which the penalty is death. He has all the pride and self-will of the absolute ruler, whose word is law. He is the State; and the Voice of the People is of no account. The breaker of the law must die. It is nothing to him that she is a member of his own family, the sister of the dead soldier, honouring whose remains was her only crime, his own sister's child, the destined bride of his son, a weak girl just in the first bloom of her youth and beauty. None of these things moves him. The remonstrances of his son, at first respectful, but gradually rising in anger till he sees they are ineffectual, when he hurries away to join his betrothed in her living tomb, have no power to shake his resolution. Only in one thing does Kreon show himself reasonable. He will not confound the innocent with the guilty. Having at first classed the two sisters together as equally worthy of death, he at once with-

draws his sentence as regards Ismene, as soon as he is reminded that she was not actively concerned in the proceedings. The doer of the deed, however, must die. She must go down into the tomb alive, there by slow degrees to pine away, till death shall mercifully release her from her pain.

In this case the Nemesis was not delayed; and here let us pause to notice how far this great poet, and how far the Athenians, had advanced in their knowledge of the laws of the world, and of the laws of human nature, when the retribution brought about by man's crime or folly could be represented with so little suggestion of supernatural agency. The doctrine of retribution among the Greeks has a very interesting history; but there is time at present only to note that it appears to have originated, as indeed we might expect it would, in very anthropomorphic ideas of God, and of the relations of God to man. Nemesis, as originally thought of, was not provoked by the anger of the gods against sin, but by their jealousy of man when he grew so rich, or so powerful, as to threaten their supremacy. A man might be as inhuman as he liked to his brother man, and they would take no notice, but let him be-

come too arrogant, or too proud, through wealth or worldly success, and Nemesis was sure to overtake him in the form of a terrible reverse of fortune. Do we not find this idea even in the Bible—as indeed where could we more hopefully look for the primitive ideas of mankind? In the legend of the Tower of Babel, we are told that the people had planned to build a tower whose top would reach to heaven. Then the Lord came down to see the tower, and fearing what it might lead to, determined to put a stop to the work by confusing their language. It was not that the people had committed any sin. It is not even said that they were getting too proud. It was simply that they were growing too powerful, and it was an act of prudence on the part of the Deity to stop them. But Sophocles and the tragic poets of Greece had evidently got beyond this stage of thought. With them the moral law was rooted in the nature of things. It was from eternity, and 'no one could tell the hour that saw its birth.'

In the case of Kreon the Nemesis, I say, was not delayed. The blind old prophet, Tiresias appears on the scene, and denounces woe upon the proud despot. Con-

vinced at last of his error by a man who had never deceived him, he hastens to the tomb, but only to find it is too late. Antigone has put an end to her existence by means of a noose made from her own garments. Hæmon driven to madness by the fate of his bride draws his sword on his father, but failing to reach him turns it against himself, and dies by a self-inflicted stroke. Eurydice, the wife of Kreon, also kills herself, on hearing what has taken place; and the wretched man staggers forth, to prolong an existence worse than death, in the awful consciousness of having been the murderer of his son, his wife, and his son's bride.

The errors of Kreon are manifest enough. To the Greek they were summed up in one word. They were a violation of sound sense, a dereliction from the reasonable mind. The lesson of the drama is, as usual, committed to the Chorus, in this case, of servile Senators who scarce dared to utter a word of remonstrance against the Tyrant's decree.

In the prose of the Oxford translation the brief moral runs :—

'To be *wise* is the first part of happiness; and it behoves us not to be guilty of irreverence in those things at least that concern

the gods; for the haughty words of the vaunting, paying the penalty of severe affliction, have taught wisdom to old age.'

But there is a distinct word for wisdom (*sophia*) which is not the one here used. Wisdom to the Greek was something that came to him from without, something that might be learnt. What is meant here is rather sound sense, or, as I have said, the reasonable mind. Yet the English word 'wisdom' is perhaps indispensable, and in its higher Biblical sense its use will be pardoned in the last line of the following attempt at a rhymed version:—

Supreme in happiness is he
  Who *Reason's* voice obeys;
And at the altars of the gods
  His humble duty pays;
But boastful words on haughty men
  Shall dire confusion bring;
Then let old age this lesson learn,
  Wisdom's the chiefest thing.

VII

FELIX BEFORE PAUL: MAN THE CREATOR OF THE MORAL ORDER

And as he (Paul) reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled [was terrified, R.V.].—Acts 24,[25].

PAUL had often stood before the rulers of this world, for Christ's name's sake; he had already stood before this very Felix, accused of being 'a pestilent fellow, and a mover of insurrections among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes'; but now, it would seem, the situation was reversed; it was now the turn of Felix to stand as one accused before Paul, to hear his crimes set forth and his sentence pronounced, and as he did so, and as Paul discoursed upon such themes as righteousness, temperance, and a future judgment, Felix trembled, as the common version has it, or, more literally, was terrified—was filled with fear.

Following the fortunes of Paul, we may be reminded that, sailing from Miletus where he had met the Ephesian elders, he had landed at Tyre, and in spite of the warning of Agabus that he would be made a prisoner at Jerusalem, had proceeded on his journey thither, reaching it in time for Pentecost; that there he had a narrow escape with his life, having been rescued from the mob who would have torn him in pieces, by Claudius Lysias, the captain of the temple-garrison, and that by him he was sent with a large military escort to Cæsarea to be tried by the Roman procurator, Felix. At Cæsarea Paul, who had been hurried away from Jerusalem in secret in consequence of a conspiracy to put him to death, was kept a prisoner in Herod's *prætorium*, or palace, for five days, until his accusers should come down. Presently Ananias, the high-priest, with some members of the Sanhedrin, or great council of seventy, arrived, bringing with them a pleader, bearing the Roman name of Tertullus, one well acquainted, no doubt, with both Roman and Jewish law, and though himself a Jew, as is obvious from his speech, speaking Greek, perhaps Latin also, to present their case. The charges preferred

by Tertullus were serious enough. They did not concern merely the Jewish law. Had the accusation against Paul been only that of profaning the temple, Felix might have acted like Gallio and dismissed the case, or remitted it to the Sanhedrin. 'If this be a question of words and names, and your law, look ye to it; *I* will be no judge of such matters.' It is true indeed that Claudius Lysias had represented the case in this light, and had declared that Paul was accused of nothing that deserved death or imprisonment. The charge of stirring up insurrection, however, deliberately brought by Tertullus, could not be lightly passed over, and we cannot wonder, perhaps, that Felix should not have been in any hurry to discharge his prisoner. He treated him, however, with great leniency. He knew from the letter of Lysias that Paul was a Roman citizen. Giving him in charge therefore to a centurion to be bound according to the Roman custom, with a single chain—his right arm fastened to the soldier's left—he ordered that in all other respects he should be at liberty, and that his friends should have free access to him. Moreover, his curiosity, it would seem, having been excited,

he sent for Paul not once but frequently, and had conversations with him; hoping also, the historian tells us, that Paul would give him a bribe to let him go.

This Felix who now filled the place formerly occupied by Pontius Pilate as Procurator of Judæa, having been appointed to that office by the Emperor Claudius, was a freedman, not therefore a Roman by birth, and by all accounts a man of vile character. A brave soldier and a skilful general, he was not, indeed, undeserving of the encomium pronounced upon him by the advocate Tertullus. He had, by his vigorous measures, pacified his province, dispersed the bands of robbers by which it was infested, and in particular overcome the Egyptian impostor who for some time, at the head of four thousand men, had defied the Roman arms—the same man for whom Lysias had rather strangely mistaken the Apostle. So that it was true that owing to his prudent conduct the nation had now for some years enjoyed the blessing of peace. He was, however, a profligate—cruel, treacherous, rapacious, and extortionate. It is recorded of him by Josephus that having failed to capture Eleazar, the leader of a robber band, he

enticed him by solemn promises of his personal safety to become his guest, and having by this means got him into his power, sent him captive to Rome. The ex-high priest, Jonathan, received even worse treatment at his hands. This man had remonstrated with him for some of his arbitrary acts, and in consequence Felix hired a number of assassins to go with daggers concealed under their cloaks and kill him in the temple. The character of the governor is thus summed up by Tacitus in one of his epigrammatic sentences :—'Antonius Felix, a monster of cruelty and lust, exercised the power of a king in the spirit of a slave.'

Felix was married to one of the most beautiful women of the time—to Drusilla, the youngest of the three daughters of Herod Agrippa I, and sister of Agrippa II—the 'King Agrippa' of the Acts. 'After certain days,' says the historian, 'Felix came with his own wife, Drusilla, who was a Jewess.' As one of the Herodian family, she would not, of course, be exactly a Jewess by birth, and she could not have been a very strict one by religion, or she would not have been married to Felix. But even Jewish society, no doubt, could relax itself some-

what in the case of such high personages, and the Herods, though mixing freely in Roman society, seem generally to have been looked upon, and to have looked upon themselves, as Jews. Paul, for example, is quite sure that King Agrippa believes the prophets, and even Herod the Great was credited with believing the scriptures when it was said he sent to inquire of the scribes where the Christ should be born.

It is rather curious that Luke gives no hint of the disreputable circumstances in which Drusilla had become the wife of Felix, not unlike those which, in the case of her uncle, Herod the Tetrarch, had led to the murder of the Baptist. Drusilla, like Herodias, was already a married woman. Her husband was a foreign prince, Azizus, King of Emesa, whom she was, in like manner, persuaded to forsake for one living more in the great world. Felix had met her at Rome, and being at this time intimate with one Simon a magician, supposed by some to be the Simon mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as having sought to purchase the gift of the Holy Spirit with money, he is said to have employed this man to use his power—'drugs and charms and mighty magic'—to win the beautiful

Jewess from her allegiance to her lawful husband. It so happened, however, that King Azizus died the next year; so that Luke was apparently justified in speaking of her as Felix's wife; and he may not have been acquainted with all the circumstances of the case. However that may be, it is intelligible that Drusilla, as one versed in the Jews' religion, and having some belief in the scriptures of the prophets, would be interested in the new doctrine which Paul preached, and we may well suppose it to have been partly at her instance, and to gratify her curiosity, that the Apostle was first sent for. At the same time Felix himself would seem, from his intimacy with the sorcerer just mentioned, and his trust in magical arts, to have been a superstitious man, and he was probably curious about all the new cults which were so rife in Rome at this time. *Vice and Superstition are by no means incompatible*; indeed, being equally departures from mental sanity, they rather help one another; and, as 'conscience doth make cowards of us all,' the memory of past sins, of passions indulged, of laws broken, of fellow-creatures injured, rouses fears of the unseen powers that may be conceived as

working behind the scene for the vindication of right, and the punishment of evil-doing. Drusilla, as a believer in the scriptures and therefore already half a Christian, and Felix, as a man conscious that there was much in his past life that would be condemned by the impartial judgment of his contemporaries, certainly of all the good and wise men of his time—and even in that corrupt age many such must have been known to him—much that could not but be displeasing to any moral God or gods, if such gods there were, were both interested in what Paul had to say.

Cruelty and *lust*—barbarous cruelty shown in the ruthless slaughter of rebels, not very criminal in the eyes of a Roman unless carried to excess, and in secret assassinations to gratify personal revenge; lust, as in the case of Drusilla, and no doubt habitual indulgence in vice—these are the charges of Tacitus against Felix. Observe, then, how exactly Paul's discourse corresponds with this indictment. Paul reasoned, or discoursed, of righteousness—of justice, just dealing—of which Felix in his administration knew little, or which he had often violated; and of temperance, or self-control, which he had never practised. And as he did so,

and as he brought before him the certain truth as he held it to be—the truth which, as Drusilla knew, was partly revealed in the old scriptures—that before long the heavens would open, and the Judge of all the earth appear in glory to reward the good and punish in eternal fires all evil-doers, Felix, says the historian, was smitten with terror, and answered, 'For the present, go thy way, and when I have found a more convenient season, I will call for thee.'

It is not said that Felix, as the result of frequent interviews with the Apostle, was persuaded to become a Christian; nor is it probable. It does not appear indeed that the impression made upon him was either deep or lasting. That his conscience was pricked and his fears roused for the moment we may well believe—though, after all, since we cannot assume the visible trembling erroneously ascribed to him by the common version, Luke only records his own impression as to another man's feeling. He may be said, in fact, to have merely made an incursion into the consciousness of Felix with the possible result of discovering or imagining what was not there. Nor is the motive assigned by Luke himself for these frequent

interviews consistent with any very serious purpose. At best, then, Felix would seem merely to have set the interests of his soul on the same level with the gratification of his avarice, and to have sought to make use of the Apostle for the accomplishment of two objects—to get money, and to learn something of the new religion which threatened woe to sinners like himself.

Leaving, then, the particular case of Felix, we may now ask, Is there not rather a tendency with writers whether of fiction or of history, to over-estimate the power of conscience, to exaggerate its terrors, to speak of its whips and stings, its agonies and tortures, in a way which, in many cases at least, there is nothing in the consciousness of the sinner to justify; to ascribe to others—to the bad man—the feelings and sensations, not always even which we ourselves, perhaps, would have, but which we think we ought to have, were we to follow a similar evil course? It is difficult not to suspect that there are many bad men in the world—many who do things which every moral code would condemn—who yet never feel those secret scourges of which poets speak, never lie stretched on the rack of remorse, but so

long at least as they are not found out, so long as they are treated by those around them as praiseworthy characters, are fairly well contented with themselves, and able to look with complacency on their past lives. It is said it is difficult for us to see ourselves as others see us. That may be so sometimes; but is it not often also even more difficult *not* to see ourselves as others see us, but to see ourselves as we really are? Is not the commonest temptation to shut our eyes to whatever is hidden from the eyes of our neighbours, and to judge ourselves as leniently as, probably, we are judged by others? When King David stole his friend's wife, and put that friend himself in the forefront of the battle, that he might be slain, though he may have known in a dim kind of way that he was doing wrong, he reflected also that he was merely exercising the rights accorded in those days to every God-appointed despot; nor does his conscience seem to have pricked him until the prophet Nathan appeared before him with his simple parable of the poor man's lamb, and his stern denunciation, 'Thou art the man!' Caiaphas, the poet Blake tells us—

> Was in his own mind
> A benefactor to mankind.

And no doubt he was, since he believed it expedient that one man should die for the sins of the people. When Calvin burned Servetus, if he had any qualms of conscience, they were doubtless removed by the approval which his action met with from his brethren. The late Sultan of Turkey, infamous in connexion with the Armenian and Bulgarian massacres of last century, may, for aught we know to the contrary, have looked on himself as a most estimable person and a wise and beneficent ruler.[1] Shut up in his palace on the shores of the Bosphorus, the European condemnation of his atrocities scarcely reached his ears, or if it did at all, he despised it as only the voice of Christian ignorance, prejudice, or malevolence. Surrounded by flatterers, and brought up from his childhood to believe that the Sultan can do no wrong, to believe too that the followers of the Prophet alone have any rights in this world, that they are the favourites of God, and the rest of mankind made to be their slaves, he is not likely to be much troubled in his mind for the sufferings of his Armenian or Macedonian subjects, who, he has been told, are

[1] This sermon was preached when these horrors were still fresh in the public mind.

in a state of constant rebellion against his authority, and require to have stern measures dealt out to them. And so in truth it must always be that the opinion of those about us, of those with whom we are in daily contact, to whom we have been accustomed to look up, and on whose goodwill our happiness largely depends, must enter as an important element into our estimate of ourselves ; and although it is sometimes cynically said of this man or that man who has wronged his neighbour or otherwise sinned, that he would never have repented if he had not been found out, it is a sober truth, and in the nature of things it could not be otherwise, that it is just the being found out that adds its greatest bitterness to remorse and often probably originates a pain that would otherwise be scarcely felt. And it is for this reason that in the Bible allegory the Last Judgment is represented as a grand public affair, when all the sins which every one has committed in this life will be proclaimed aloud to the whole world, and even their most secret thoughts revealed. For conscience is confessedly not a private and individual faculty, but is based on the universal judgment of mankind. The Voice of conscience—call it the Voice of God if you

will—is still also, very emphatically the voice of *man*. Conditioned by circumstances, modified or changed by national or racial influences, forms of government, climate or natural scenery—the product of education and discipline—the education and discipline not of the individual, but of generation after generation of men through interminable ages, the voice of conscience speaks to us from afar, and echoes, but with increasing power and confidence, the judgment of the human mind in all states of civilization. Slowly and by degrees man learns to distinguish the right from the wrong. By experience he learns what makes for the universal good, and by his social instincts he desires that good. Thus conscience is gradually shaped into being. The voice of conscience speaks within each of us, but it speaks only faintly and feebly so long as it is a single voice, or as we ourselves stand isolated and cut off in our feelings and our lives from our fellow-men. It assumes its greatest power and speaks in its most authoritative tones, only then when it is understood to reverberate the voice of the past centuries and re-echo the judgment of mankind.

Nor should we perhaps complain that there is this tendency which I have noticed to exaggerate—if indeed it be so—the terrors of a guilty conscience. For it is only fitting after all that man should assert strongly the moral order which he makes. If he did not use all the powers of language, all the resources of poetry and fiction, all the influence which one mind or will can exercise over another, all the persuasions of religion and the terrors of the supernatural world as well as the restraints and punishments of positive law, there is nothing in mere external nature to enforce any moral order at all. The sun shines equally on the evil and the good; the rain falls alike on the just and on the unjust; the storm, as it passes, sweeps away in its course the crops of the good man no less than of the sinner, and the holiest work or purpose will not change the nature of the elements, or save anyone, however innocent, from the consequences of another's folly or neglect. It was, indeed, a beautiful thought of Jesus whom I take to have been a high poet in his own way, to refer this impartiality of nature in the bestowal of her bounties to the universal love of the All-Father; yet even in that simple age you would have

thought it was scarcely possible to overlook the fact that the agencies of destruction are no less undistinguishing than those of beneficence, and from our modern scientific point of view we cannot but see that nearer the stern truth is the saying of the great German poet and philosopher that 'nature is unfeeling' or indifferent. Indeed, if the universe were governed according to our notions of morality, it is obvious that the sun ought not to shine equally on the evil and the good, nor the lightning to pass by the transgressor in order to strike down the innocent and the pure. It is clear then that it is man alone who possesses the key to the moral world; it is he only who can establish and maintain a moral order *in* the world. The lower creatures have their loves and hates, their friendships and enmities; but these are mere instincts implanted by nature for the preservation of the species or the individual; they have no rule, no law, no standard by which they can be measured, whether they fall below it or rise above it. It is exclusively among human beings that such a standard is found. It is on some sort of general obedience to such a standard that human society depends for its preservation

and advancement. And yet in saying that man creates the moral order, let us not be understood as denying that that order originates in a source higher than man. It is the God *in* man—the Divine working in and through him and manifesting itself in his life—in those higher aspects of which material nature gives at best only partial and fitful gleams—manifesting itself, I say, as Righteousness and Love, which both creates the moral law and causes it to be obeyed; which both sends forth Paul on his mission of mercy, and compels us to turn with abhorrence from the vices of Felix; and which, in proportion as our ears and our hearts are open to hear the eternal voices of Nature and Humanity, becomes to each of us the Judge before whom we must stand or fall.

DATE DUE

GAYLORD

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

GTU Library
2400 Ridge Road
Berkeley, CA 94709
For renewals call (510) 649-2500

All items are subject to recall.